The Washington Monthly

MAY 2000

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Bill Kovach: A Newsroom Hero

West Wing Chutes and Ladders

Jonathan Alter on Chicago's Cubs

Martin Nolan on Chicago's Boss

The FDA's Drug Problem

Too fast to say the pills work; too slow to find out when they don't

POMPER

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Letters

In March we invited readers to participate in an Open Forum concerning the health-care debate between Malcolm Gladwell and Adam Gopnik ("Canada v. U.S.," March 2000). We received many thoughtful responses—more than we can print here. The following is a selection of those letters. More can be found on our Website at www.washingtonmonthly.com/forum/debate.html.

Sick Men

Not since Newt Gingrich claimed women get monthly "infections" have I read anything as ignorantly sexist as Malcolm Gladwell's assertion that women "need" to see a doctor three times a month.

Absent pregnancy or chronic illness, there is no reason for a healthy adult woman to see a doctor even three times a year, much less three times a month. Meanwhile, my 40-ish male contemporaries are in and out of doctor's offices weekly, mostly for prescriptions: If it's not Rogaine for their bald spot and Viagra for their bedroom, it's Celebrex for the bursitis in their golf-swing arm, Claritin for their hay fever, or Lipitor to cut their cholesterol without having to exercise.

Not once in my working life have I used in health care anything remotely close to the amount I paid for health "insurance." Not the year I needed an MRI; not the year I ended up in the emergency room.

So-called health insurance in the U.S. is nothing more nor less than a protection racket that puts the Mob to shame. If you have it, you won't get run over by a truck. If you don't have it, you'll get run over by a truck.

Getting run over by a truck, of course, is one of the few excuses for needing health care that HMOs will accept.

LISA AUG
Frankfort, Ky.

Mixing It Up

Your excellent health-care debate (March) was fascinating. Gladwell and Gopnik both made odd mixes of cogent and specious arguments.

Yet, out of it all, came this recurring and alarming claim by Gladwell: "[M]en don't need health care until they're middle-aged." Similarly, "I don't know that young men need health insurance."

Amazing; appalling! And then his well-to-do man's advice to women: If their health insurance fails them, they bought the wrong insurance. Just buy a more costly policy!

With those kinds of arguments, I found myself landing firmly on Adam Gopnik's side. No contest.

TOM ABLES
San Diego, Calif.

No Free Lunch

Adam Gopnik describes the birth of his wife's sister's "very premature baby."

"The one thing they [the parents] never thought about, the one thing they never considered, the one thing they never had to pay attention to was: *How much will this cost?*" (Emphasis mine.)

"That," concludes Gopnik, "seems to me, in itself, the most powerful argument you can make for socialized medicine, to put it in the bluntest possible terms."

Who *did* pay for the child's birth? *Somebody* had to pay for it, sir, there's no such thing as a free lunch. So we have to assume that thousands of Canadians had to pay for the child's birth, and for several thousand others, right across the country.

LEWIS S. DABNEY
Chestnut Hill, Mass.

Who Pays?

The argument that health care should be universal and "free" is specious. For one thing, the literature says that, even in countries offering universal health insurance, the poor receive less care and have higher morbidity and mortality rates than those who are better off. (It follows that if you are chronically ill, you are less likely to be well-educated and gainfully employed and well-off financially.)

Free care leads to over-utilization, which leads to more medical errors, injuries, infections, and deaths, and sends costs soaring. This, of course, creates relatively lucrative jobs in nationalized health services whose clinicians are happy to spend the government's money and to make work for themselves.

The problem is that in Canada patients can get easy access to primary care, which they should pay for out of pocket, and they have a hard time getting access to acute care, which should be easily accessible and fully insured but is ruthlessly rationed by government bureaucrats and budget-conscious providers.

In your debate, Adam Gopnik notes Bill Bradley's oh-so-sad encounter with a mother who had to write a check to pay for the care of her sick son. That scene should have been celebrated as the American way. That mother was able to write that check. Maybe the cost of caring for her son delayed the purchase of a new sweater or living-room lamp, but that's the cost of having kids.

In this country, people under 65 have strong financial incentives to earn enough money to not only have several cars, kids, TV sets, health-club memberships, and afternoons on the golf course, but also to have access to the best medicine money can buy. People should know that if they want unlimited access to health-care providers and to the best physicians and hospitals and drugs, they will have to buy the appropriate insurance. This is a strong incentive to be financially responsible as well as ambitious and hard working.

Less successful and poor people should have access to the health-care system for catastrophic care, but they should not be led to believe that they are entitled to the Lexus and BMW care earned by people who've taken the trouble to get decent educations and jobs and have put money away for medical emergencies. This may sound strange from a journalist who has been covering health care for almost 24 years and owes his life to the medical system, but health care is not a right. It is and must be a purchased

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service.

The point that Gladwell tries, rather inarticulately, I think, to make is that the diversity of the U.S. health care system gives patients incredible opportunities to find the right physician and hospital, even in managed care. And anyone close to hospitals, physicians, and insurers knows how hard millions of very bright clinicians and administrators are working to do a better job and what's right for patients. In our decentralized system, there are many more opportunities for experimentation and information sharing than in the centralized clinics and hospitals in France, Canada and the U.K.

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HEALTH CARE STRATEGIC
MANAGER, CHAIRMAN AND CEO
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Been There, Done That

I thoroughly enjoyed the U.S. vs. Canada health-care debate between Adam Gopnik and Malcolm Gladwell (March 2000). While I thought Gladwell's gender analysis of the two health-care systems was theoretically interesting, it did nothing to assuage the unease I feel as a Canadian-born woman living within the American system. Like Gopnik, I too have lived under three different medical regimes: Canada for 21 years, Great Britain for six, and the United States for the past two. To add interest to this tallying, I have experienced the same medical condition in all three countries, and the same operation in two. Ten years ago, in Edmonton, Canada, I underwent a laparotomy (major abdominal surgery) to remove a large ovarian cyst and spent six days in the hospital. The total bill was $8 (for the cost of a private phone). Four years later, while living in London, I consulted my National Health Service GP in London about reoccurring abdominal pain and was told not to be "hypochondriacal." In view of my previous surgery (and in disbelief at her dismissive approach), I insisted on an ultrasound exam which, strangely enough, revealed another cyst. Subsequent ultrasounds were performed but eventually the cyst shrank and I never required surgery. This time, the bill was zero (mind you, I did perform my own diagnosis and pushed for my own treatment).

Last spring, I went to Boston's Mass. General Hospital with acute abdominal pain and immediately received a CT scan, ultrasound, and a barrage of other tests. More cysts were discovered and my ob/gyn eventually removed them laparoscopically (a minor surgical procedure) and diagnosed endometriosis. The total bill was ostensibly zero, unless you count the cost of monstrous insurance headaches. I know I received excellent medical treatment and only had to spend about 30 hours in the hospital, post-surgery. Throughout the experience, however, I probably spent at least twice that amount of time sorting out payment details, having switched from a freelancer's insurance to coverage under my husband's benefits plan, and from one doctor who was not covered, to another who was. Though I feel fortunate to have received world-class care during my operation (Boston is a great city in which to get ill), my anxiety over coverage issues was certainly a hindrance to recovery. The thought of possibly having been temporarily uninsured when this happened—as many freelancers I know are—makes me remember how precarious and unequal this American system feels.

Though parts of the Canadian system seem to be going the way of its more market-savvy neighbor to the south (neither Gladwell nor Gopnik touched on the controversial proposed move in Alberta towards a two-tiered system, with entirely privatized health care as an option), a single-payer system still seems the social and moral preference over treating health-care as just another market commodity—just as long as that single payer isn't the government of Great Britain.

SUSANNAH KETCHUM
Boston, Mass.

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The Washington Monthly

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Tilting at Windmills

BY CHARLES PETERS

The Cat Who Kept Me Cool • The Magic of 527 • Stickin' It To The Dick Morrises
The Criminal Who Wouldn't Quit • The Judge Who Wouldn't Wait • Mrs. Astor and Second Hand Rose

"STRONG ECONOMY COULD Make His Fight Difficult, Bush Says" ran the headline in a late March edition of *The Washington Times*. Cynical Republicans must be tempted to sabotage the economy, just as Democrats suspect they sabotaged negotiations to free the Iranian hostages until after Ronald Reagan won a victory that was in considerable part influenced by voter dismay over Carter's handling of the hostage crisis. In that case Democratic suspicions have never been confirmed. But in one case they were. That was in the 1968 election in which Richard Nixon's narrow victory over Hubert Humphrey was helped by Republican sabotage of the Paris peace talks. Humphrey was overtaking Nixon in the polls the week before the election, helped by the fact that the Johnson administration seemed close to negotiating a Vietnam agreement. But a Republican operative Anna Chennault persuaded the South Vietnamese to throw a monkey wrench into the settlement the weekend before the election. Could Alan Greenspan be the Anna Chennault of 2000?

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THERE WAS A STORY IN ONE of the local papers last week about a suburban couple who had searched for their lost cat for six months before finally finding it. As a former cat owner I understood why they kept looking. Our first cat, Martha, loved to escape the confines of our backyard and roam the neighborhood. I always followed, searching behind shrubs and bushes, calling her name, which was usually futile because, outside our home, she took delight in pretending she had never seen me before. It is hard to understand why we were so devoted to Martha. She bit. But, since she was our first cat, we assumed all cats bit and that was just part of the bargain. Martha did have one endearing quality. Whenever domestic discord would cause me to raise my voice—my wife says I yelled—Martha would leap on to my lap, put her paws on my chest, and yowl. The absurdity of the scene made it impossible to maintain the seriously self-righteous attitude I usually bring to family altercations. My wife and I would start laughing. Having done her duty, Martha would jump down and cast an eye to see if the back door was ajar enough to permit another jaunt through the neighborhood.

Whenever I raised my voice, Martha would put her paws on my chest and yowl.

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BY A 5-4 MARGIN THE SUPREME Court ruled that the Food and Drug Administration can't regulate tobacco. It seems to me that the FDA had a good case. The 1938 law establishing the agency gave it the power to regulate any article other than food "intended to affect the structure or any function of the body." How can anyone doubt that nicotine affects bodily function?

This is a scary decision coming in the wake of last year's D.C. Circuit Court of Appeals decision that held that Congress could not delegate the power to issue regulations to the Environmental Protection Agency. These decisions hark back to the days when conservative Supreme Court justices were striking down FDR's attempt to regulate the cruelties and excesses of unfettered capitalism. Liberals, moderates—all reasonable men and women—should hear alarm bells ringing.

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"ONE OFFICER IS CAUGHT soliciting Hollywood hookers, an officer tears up a traffic citation for sexual favors, and a sergeant repeatedly rapes a cadet." All of this happens in a new book, *The Rose Garden*, by a Pasadena, California police officer, Naum L. Ware. The book also describes a lieutenant who "deletes records of a 911 domestic violence call from the home of a former chief." According to Richard Winton of the *Los Angeles Times* to whom I'm indebted for this account, "many incidents in the book are derived from events documented in court cases, police reports and newspaper stories over the last decade." So how has the Pasadena police department responded to the book? It has suspended the author. His colleagues are being offered counseling. The good guy

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gets punished while the bad guys get counseled.

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SOMETHING ELSE TO BE ALARMED about is a looming shortage of public employees. 14,000 of New York City's 78,000 public school teachers will retire in the next 18 months, according to *The New York Times*. And according to *Governing* magazine, 42 percent of state and local government employees will be eligible to retire in the next 15 years. I'm sure you're tired of my complaints about the federal government's failure to recruit, but now we see that the problem extends to the state and local level as well. "Teachers, cops, civil engineers, accountants, mid-level managers, nurses and budget analysts are going to be retiring in droves," reports *Governing*. "At the same time, the pool of potential job candidates is going to be shrinking. The number of workers 25-44 years old—prime recruitment fodder for governments—is expected to drop by 3 million between 1998 and 2008."

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IF YOU HAVE SUSPECTED THAT universities have too much fat in their administrative structure, you will be interested to know that Marshall University has 15 vice presidents. That's right, 15. There's even one for "executive affairs" not to mention the one for "multicultural and international affairs."

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ALTHOUGH I TEND TO BE A liberal on most issues, there are a few on which I find myself more sympathetic to the conservatives. One is violent crime. I cannot see why courts repeatedly put violent offenders back on the streets where they endanger the rest of us. Take Joseph C. Palczynski, who was recently killed by Baltimore police after he had kidnapped his girlfriend and killed four other people. In 1988 he had been convicted for attacking a girlfriend. He got probation. In 1989, he was convicted for an assault on a 16-year-old girl. He got four years in prison for this one. But he must not have served it all, because in 1991 he was charged with beating another girlfriend. This time he was taken to a hospital from which he escaped after three days. Following another domestic violence complaint from a girlfriend in Idaho in 1992, he was convicted in Baltimore in 1995 for attacking a girlfriend's father, who suffered four broken ribs. He got a ten-year suspended sentence and probation. Certainly by then, if not before, he should have been put away for life. That way he would still be alive today and so would the four people he killed.

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THAT THE CLINTON-GORE Reinventing Government effort still has some challenges to meet was demonstrated by a recent survey of federal employees. When asked if "creativity and innovation are rewarded" at their agency, only 29 percent said yes. When asked if "corrective actions are taken when employees do not meet performance standards," just 28 percent replied in the affirmative.

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SPEAKING OF VIOLENT CRIMINALS being treated too tenderly, here's another example. The background is that two Washington cabdrivers have been killed on the job in the last seven months. Another was stabbed in the eye. And still another was shot in the head and paralyzed. Cabbies are scared.

So what did Judge Robert Morin do when he had a defendant before him who had put a knife to the throat of his cab driver and pleaded guilty to robbery and possession of a prohibited weapon? Morin gave the defendant, Juan David Moreno, probation and 200 hours of community service, and suspended a sentence of five to fifteen years despite, *The Washington Post*'s Neely Tucker reports, "recommendations by the prosecutor and a court investigator that Moreno serve years in prison."

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WHEN PEOPLE TELL ME THAT they buy SUVs because they will need them when it snows, I'm sometimes a bit skeptical. In the case of a good many District of Columbia employees, it turns out that this skepticism was justified. During this winter's Washington snowstorm, *Washington Times* reporters surveyed the parking lots of ten city agencies with 47 SUVs. The majority of the SUVs, which had been justified on the basis that they would help employees get to work during weather emergencies, sat idle and snow-covered. At the same time, the District's police department was borrowing similar vehicles from the National Guard.

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ONE WAY TO CONTROL campaign spending is to reduce the supply of money flowing into the campaign. Another is to reduce the amount flowing out—the money the campaign spends. One way to do this that the *Monthly* has long favored is to require stations to provide free TV. time. Another is to ban the manufactured commercials that through artifice exaggerate the candidate's virtues and/or his opponent's vices. And I have a new idea for controlling campaign expense. It has the delightful incidental effect of sticking it to the Dick Morrises of the world.

Campaign consultants now have a vested interest in spending more and more of their candidates' funds, regardless of how wise the expenditures may be. Most of them get a rake off from the spending they recommend, whether it be for purchasing TV time or producing commercials

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or providing direct mail or phone bank services. If all consultants were required to work for a flat fee and not allowed to receive any commissions or have any ownership interest in the various media they use, a major dent would almost certainly be put in campaign spending. The incentive to spend and spend without regard to real need for the spending would be gone.

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DID YOU KNOW THAT FOUNDATIONS are only required by law to spend five percent of their assets per year? Since their assets have been increasing at a much higher rate—over the past 20 years investments in the Standard and Poor's 500 have returned 17.6 percent a year, all of which is tax free to the foundation—these organizations "look more like investment banks than groups established to give away money" in the words of Amy Domini and Tom Van Dyck writing in *The New York Times* op-ed page. The C. S. Mott Foundation's assets are up 176 percent in the past decade, growing from $838 million to $2.3 billion. Shouldn't the law require that a higher percentage be given away instead of just being allowed to accumulate? By the way, that five percent a year the foundations have to spend can, Domini and Van Dyck point out, fund "often-handsome salaries and travel expenses for foundation officials."

As Michelle Cottle argued in these pages a couple of years ago, a similar point can be made about university endowments, which have grown immensely in recent years. Why, Cottle asked, do the universities allow that money to accumulate instead of reducing tuition? Instead, many not only let the endowment grow but raise the tuition at the same time.

The rake-off the Dick Morrises get on TV and other expenses motivates them to inflate campaign costs.

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SPEAKING OF CAMPAIGN spending, have you heard about 527? The number stands for a section in the Internal Revenue Service code that provides the latest loophole through which millions of dollars are now pouring, including the $2 million anti-McCain environmental record ads that are thought to have done serious damage to the Arizona senator in the days before Super Tuesday. 527 has been interpreted by the most recent court decision to mean that you can open a bank account and put any amount of money into it you choose or that you can persuade anyone, including Chinese generals and Buddhist nuns, to give. And, as long as the money does not earn interest and as long as the ads you buy do not explicitly use the words "vote for" or "elect" or "vote against" or "don't elect," you can use all that money to destroy any candidate you don't like—all this without having to report anything to either the Internal Revenue Service or the Federal Election Commission. Wait 'til Richard Mellon Scaife learns about this one.

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THE SENATE VOTED 100-0 TO abolish the limit on the amount of money Social Security recipients can earn and still receive their full Social Security payments. The vote was hailed by practically everyone. As a senior citizen, I should share in the joy. But it just doesn't make sense to me to completely abolish the limit. Of course the current figure of $17,000 is way too low and needed to be raised substantially. But why should someone earning a $500,000 salary get Social Security? There should be some limit.

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ON THE EDUCATION FRONT there are two pieces of good news. The first is that Al Gore and George W. Bush seem to be competing to come up with the best education program. Bush's emphasis on accountability seems good to me as does Gore's radically increased funding for pre-school education. But the best news of all comes from Georgia where Governor Roy Barnes has persuaded the legislature to abolish tenure. Dramatic improvement in public education depends on getting rid of first the downright bad teachers and then the mediocre, replacing them with the kind of dedicated and talented teachers who are so desperately needed in our schools.

Good teachers don't need tenure. A stupid principal who tries to fire one will have to contend with the good teacher's angry colleagues as well as with indignant students and their parents.

Unfortunately, the Georgia teachers' union forced a compromise on Barnes that means new teachers don't get tenure but the ones who are already there retain it. That means some of the people who should go will stay. Still the reform is a major breakthrough that points the way both to the reform of education and also of the civil service which has long been stultified by tenure.

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TERRY WARD WAS RECENTLY honored by the CIA, after having been fired by the agency for covering up its involvement with a Guatemalan colonel who in turn had been involved in the killing of Jennifer Harbury's husband Efraim Bamaca Velasquez and of an American citizen named Michael Devine. According to *The Washington Post*, the honors were attacked by human rights activists and defended by veteran CIA offi-

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cials. But what fascinated me about the *Post* article was what it said about Ward's assignments.

He was in Argentina from 1965 to 1968, the Dominican Republic from 1969 to 1970, Bolivia from 1971 to 1972, Venezuela from 1973 to 1975, and Peru from 1976 to 1977. He also had a two-year assignment in Honduras and served in Laos and Switzerland as well as Guatemala. This kind of pattern is common in the CIA and the other foreign services, including the State Department, USIA, and the military.

Too often employees are assigned to one place for such a short time that they hardly have learned their way around before they're off to the next post. It is a substantial factor in their failure to become immersed in the local society. It's so much easier to circulate among their fellow Americans or within the diplomatic social community. It's always seemed to me that tours of five or six years make a lot more sense than the two or three year variety.

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ANYONE WHO HAS EVER practiced criminal law or been the victim of the hurry-up-and-wait existence of the average juror will recognize the beauty of a simple reform instituted by Judge Duane Slone of Jefferson County, Tennessee: He refuses to allow plea bargains on days trials are scheduled to start. This is significant because prosecutors and defense attorneys tend to delay plea bargaining until the day the trial is to begin. Since the negotiations are often time-consuming, prospective jurors are left sitting there waiting and waiting for something to happen. In Judge Slone's court, they don't have to wait. Trials begin promptly at 9 a.m.

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ANOTHER RECENT EPISODE that reminds you that conservatives occasionally have a point comes from Georgetown University, where feminist students recently produced a play called "The Vagina Monologues." A conservative columnist for the student newspaper questioned the appropriateness of the play. The paper fired him. In the old days at Georgetown, the school's administration would have suppressed the play and a student columnist would have been fired for protesting the suppression. Liberals would have been upset then. It seems to me that we should be equally upset now.

The good guy gets punished while the bad guys get counseling.

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THERE IS ONE Georgetown student, however, who could stand a little discipline. He's Douglas Colt, a law student who with several friends accumulated $345,000 in stock market profits by creating a tip sheet called Fast-Trades.com and using a strategy he describes thusly:

"Buy a bunch of garbage stock, tell your idiot subscribers about how great the stock is, and like sheep they will run out and buy it. Dump the shares you bought a few hours ago to all these suckers."

The SEC caught Colt and his colleagues. But they settled the case, according to the *Wall Street Journal*, "without admitting or denying the allegations, and agreed not to commit future violations." Colt, according to his attorney, "is looking forward to graduation."

Colt has been active in Republican politics. "What drew him to the GOP," reports the *Journal*, "was the party's support for less regulation."

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ANOTHER STOCK MARKET racket is being worked by technology insiders who use their knowledge of products being developed by their companies to outperform by 3-1 the results of stock purchases by insiders at non-technology companies. "Technology is poorly disclosed to investors," New York University professor Baruch Lev explains to *The New York Times*. "While some technology-related information should be kept secret from competition, it gives an advantage to insiders and well-connected investors. Do insiders exploit this informational advantage, at the expense of uninformed investors? Our answer is an emphatic 'yes'."

By the way, investors wait as long as 25 days before finding out about insider trades. Until the SEC requires immediate disclosure, they will continue to be at a disadvantage.

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I'M A GREAT BELIEVER IN CHEAP chic. In its worst form, expensive chic has kids killing each other for a pair of shoes with the right label. Cheap chic also permits people who are not making a lot of money to still feel good about what they are buying. But it has now taken a wrong direction.

Affluent ladies are searching out chic bargains, not because they need to, but because it's a way of saying "I'm smart," according to Ruth La Perla of *The New York Times*. On behalf of all the women who can't afford the expensive things, I protest. It's already tough enough finding bargains at the Secondis and Second Hand Roses. They shouldn't have to face competition from Mrs. Astor. Of course, it would be even better if no one, rich or poor, gave a damn about whether something is chic or not. ●

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Leg Room

Boeing's new toy for the executive who has everything

By Gregg Easterbrook

So you're earning 420 times as much as the typical hourly worker, you've got the vacation homes and tasteless modern-art collections, you've dumped the woman who bore your children in favor of the trophy babe. What's left out there to grasp? For the Fortune 500 CEOs and others of the newly rich, the latest answer is—an entire Boeing airliner converted to your personal use.

Rather quietly in what is usually a publicity-oriented industry, the king of aerospace firms has begun selling the Boeing Business Jet (BBJ), a 737-700 jetliner, which normally seats about 125 passengers, modified into a corporate aircraft for the use of a few executives or even just one person. Boeing delivered the first fully completed (that is, including customized interior) BBJ in September 1999, to a buyer whose identity Boeing will not disclose. The company has 33 BBJs at various stages in the manufacturing process, and says it holds orders for 56 more. The aircraft costs from $43 million to $48 million, depending on the level of interior trim—mahogany and marble push up the final price tag—plus at least $5.1 million for annual fixed costs and at least $1,400 per hour to operate. Concerned about market share, Airbus recently announced a competitor, the Airbus Corporate Jetliner (ACJ). This is an entire Airbus 319, also normally seating about 125, converted for a few VIPs. With the economy flush, aviation analysts consider the ultra-premium executive birds a significant growth arena for aircraft manufacturers, representing a sales market of several billion dollars annually. Boeing has already begun taking advance orders for the BBJ-2, an even bigger, more expensive executive airliner, based on the larger 737-800, which is now under development.

Gregg Easterbrook, *a contributing editor of* The Washington Monthly, *is a senior editor at* The New Republic.

Who's lining up to buy these airborne ego platforms? General Electric and the golfer Greg Norman are the only publicly announced U.S. customers for the BBJ. Most buyers are assumed to be Fortune 500 companies, but "have chosen to remain anonymous, which is often typical of private business jet transactions," Boeing says. Headed into that next labor negotiation, the CEO might not want it known that he's just spent $48 million in company funds on a personal toy.

Once first-class seating aboard commercial flights was seen as sufficient for the wealthy or for senior corporate management. Then the minimum became small private jets like the Gulfstream, which themselves cost millions annually to own and operate. But now a mere Gulfstream will simply no longer do. After all, mere Gulfstreams don't offer the flying equivalent of hotel suites. The Boeing Business Jet does.

The new airplane is available configured as a flying penthouse, with dual king-bed chambers, an entertaining area with leather conversation pit, even an exercise studio. TWO BDRMS STRATOSPHERE VU, $48 million—it makes East Side real estate seem like a bargain. There's an alternative BBJ cabin configuration with one bedroom for the CEO, adjoining a full-sized corporate boardroom layout where the yes-men sit waiting at a full-sized conference table. And perhaps you'd like to add options such as onboard satellite communications. For its part, Airbus offers the ACJ with a glistening chrome oversized bathroom that looks like something that would be considered overdone at the Helmsley Palace.

Care to imagine the experience of flying the BBJ? Your limo drives out onto the tarmac and straight to the plane's stairway, just as if you were secretary of state. One of the key perks of corporate jets is that they park at the private aviation terminal, allowing

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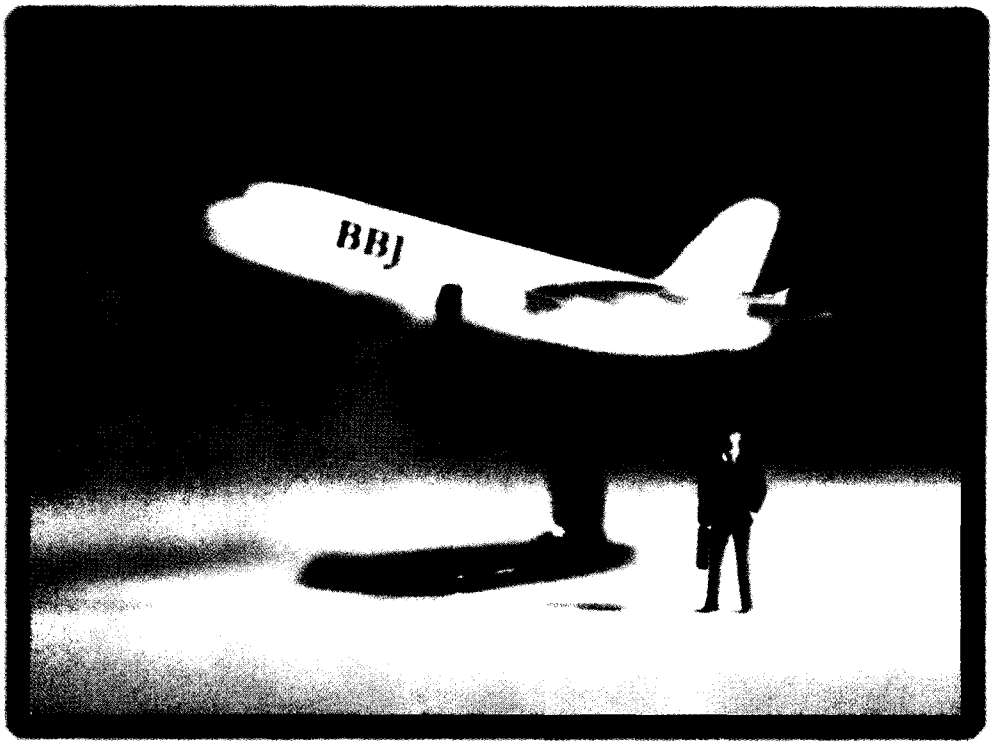
limos to pull up directly to the aircraft, no lines and no brushing shoulders with the unwashed. No humiliating bending over slightly as you must do when boarding a Lear Jet or Falcon or any other previous executive aircraft; sales material for the Boeing Business Jet boast that for a mere $48 million, you get to stand up straight. A fawning staff greets you by name, and let's hope the private flight attendants are former state beauty queens: considering what the shareholders are spending for your airborne comfort, no sense scrimping on aesthetics. Half a dozen crew members may be aboard, for you alone—one ego-stroking aspect of the BBJ is that compared to a Gulfstream, it requires a much larger flight staff standing by at the CEO's call. The moment you nod the BBJ is wheels-up, no annoying schedules or waiting for other passengers.



Aloft, you've got an entire conference area to stretch out in, or a king-sized bed to relax on as you watch a widescreen TV. You grab a quick workout on the Cybex machines. Need Evian? Snap your fingers and the flight attendant will bring it. No trouble getting the attendant's attention since you are, after all, the only passenger on the entire airliner. Afterward you freshen up in the full-sized shower, then enjoy a connoisseur's meal served in the dining room. You can linger over the coffee, since extra fuel tanks allow the BBJ to fly about 12 hours nonstop. And don't worry about spilling the cognac—the BBJ has been modified to cruise at 41,000 feet, where the air is smoother than at the altitudes used by commercial airliners.

Sitting in the conversation pit, you can key the fancy electronics to send airborne orders to corporate divisions; where better to plot a takeover than aloft in your personal airliner? Or perhaps you can rehearse the lines you will employ to justify the cost of this extravagance when the shareholders find out. Something about productivity. That's it, you'll say something about productivity.

In the 1960s, Hugh Hefner was widely lampooned for converting an entire Boeing 727, the Big Bunny, into his own private airliner. In the 1970s and 1980s, oil-country princes were ridiculed for the same indulgence. Now Boeing and Airbus are quietly promoting the idea that every CEO needs an entire airliner, a plane large enough and expensive enough to make him feel like he is riding Air Force One. The Boeing Business Jet—the perfect place for the modern executive to dash off that memo cutting health-care benefits. ●

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Memo *of the* Month

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PART B CARRIER
Phone: (530) 743-1587

HCFA
Health Care Financing Administration

March 3, 2000

Kenneth Woodrow MD
1225 Crane Street 106
Menlo Park, CA 94025

Dear Dr. Kenneth Woodrow MD,
Your opt out status will be terminated on January 26, 2000. In accordance with Section 3044.34 of the Medicare Carrier Manual (MCM) you may renew your opt out status without interruption if you file an opt out affidavit within 30 days after the expiration of your opt out status.

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Class Act

The drama of good teaching

By Alexander Nguyen

It's fourth period at Hartford Public High in Connecticut, and it's clear that good teaching is hard to define, but easy to see. In Room 338, for example, it doesn't matter that most students will eat a subsidized lunch today or that over half the student body will eventually drop out. What matters is what Susan Matthews says matters.

"We're going to talk about eyes today; we all have two," she says—no, decrees—to 22 students watching her from behind laboratory benches. "Why?" A small pause, short enough to escape conscious notice but long enough to underline the question's significance. And when Matthews launches into her introduction, she paces and gestures, delivering lab instructions in a short, clear, urgent, almost theatrical fashion. "At the end of the period," she commands, "this is what you should be able to answer."

The class breaks into groups, and Matthews, a 29-year teaching veteran who studied opera in college, is darting from group to group. "Does it matter if you have glasses?" she repeats a student's question. "You tell me. The exercise is about why you need two eyes. Does the fact that you have glasses change the fact that you have two eyes?" The student shakes his head no. "That's right," exclaims Matthews, smiling, arms thrown up, and eyes wide open. "See? You answered your own question!" Principal Joseph Wall considers Matthews one of the school's best teachers.

Upstairs, Cynthia Avezzie's English class has a decidedly mellow tone, because students are contemplating great literature. They have read canonical works like George Orwell's *Animal Farm* and less traditional texts like Amy Tan's *The Joy Luck Club*. "So what is good literature?" Avezzie muses, as much to her students as to herself. A girl offers that literature is good when it gives life to a universal feeling, such as loneliness. "That's very good," says Avezzie, picking up a pink ball and throwing it to her. "When have you felt lonely?" The student catches and cradles it as if it were made of crystal. "When someone forgets to pick me up," she says finally, tossing the ball to a classmate to give another example. Principal Wall considers Avezzie also one of the school's best teachers.

Yet where Matthews is fierce and almost dictatorial, Avezzie is mild and almost maternal. Where Matthews demands, Avezzie coaxes. Where Matthews relies on passion, Avezzie relies on care. But both are good. "They teach from the heart," says Principal Wall, and that makes the fundamental and national question of what constitutes a good teacher fiendishly frustrating for school administrators around the country.

For Common Things

Consensus in education is hard to find. But it was found in the 1960s, after the Russian launch of Sputnik highlighted the importance of math and science, and it is being found again, today, in teacher quality. *Education Week* noted recently that "pressure to improve the quality of the teaching force has never been greater," and everybody—politicians, academics, media, and teachers—has declared that better teachers are the cure to America's educational woes and the key to continued global leadership. They are the "next big thing in education reform" according to *National Journal*, an "educational birthright" according to the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, and more important than class size or vouchers, according to a 1998 Harris poll and empirical research such as a 1996 University of Tennessee study. "Fine buildings, equipment, and textbooks are important," argued Eugene Hickok, Pennsylvania's secretary of education, in 1998. "But it is the skill and dedication of the teacher that creates a place of learning."

The trouble with this consensus is finding a clear

Alexander Nguyen *is a writing fellow at* The American Prospect.

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formulation of what constitutes good teaching. "It's a Holy Grail," said Eric Hanushek, a professor at the University of Rochester who studies education. "There are many different ways to teach, many different ways to make a good teacher.... All we know is: Some people are better at teaching than others." Last year, a report on teacher quality by the National Center for Education Statistics noted that "[t]eacher quality is a complex phenomenon, and there is little consensus on what it is or how to measure it." Indeed, good teaching is a complicated issue precisely because it is both elusive and obvious at the same time. It seems to defy definition—how would one, for example, characterize it without falling prey either to the Scylla of the all-too-narrow or the Charybdis of the all-too-vague?—but it also responds to the "I-know-it-when-I-see-it" principle, as spending fourth period with Matthews or Avezzie will make clear. Yet if this is the case, then the key to finding good teachers for American schools may not lie in trying to agree on what good teaching is or attempting to measure it, but in actually watching teachers in action. The key may be to evaluate their performance in real classrooms, in authentic settings, in front of students. We do know good teaching when we see it.

Most efforts to date in evaluating teacher quality have focused on teacher preparation and qualifications for licensing. It's easy to measure, and easy to certify, based on grade-point averages, a passing score on a standardized teacher exam that tested for basic literacy and math skills, and "seat time"—the number of courses taken in curriculum development or child psychology from a state-approved teacher-training program. All these criteria for licensing, however, have generally only had the limited goal of weeding out bad teachers, never of creaming off good ones—cutoff scores were traditionally kept very low and deliberately so. Test results had "little, if any, power to predict how well people perform as teachers," a 1987 article in *Review of Research in Education* noted, mainly because they did not reward creativity, enthusiasm, flexibility or passion—crucial traits of Matthews and Avezzie.

"[In most states], you've got to take a test of literacy and subject matter," said Jerome Murphy, dean of the education faculty at Harvard. "Well, a test of literacy is basically, can you read? And a subject test is just about the basics. But even if you go over that hurdle, you can still be a horrible teacher." But when political pressure turned on teacher quality, many states responded by simply raising the bar on these criteria by requiring more degrees or higher scores. A New York State Regents' task force recommended in a 1998 report that new teachers should be required to earn a master's degree before being allowed to teach, and such states as Virginia and North Carolina raised cutoff scores on PRAXIS, an Educational Testing Service exam for aspiring teachers. These reforms quickly came under attack—a *New York Post* editorial charged the board of regents with sacrificing students on the "altar of credentialism." It was akin to a struggling basketball franchise raising its minimum height requirement in the hopes of getting better players.

Not only did requiring more degrees and better grades fail to screen out bad teachers, but they discouraged potentially good teachers without traditional education degrees from applying. "If Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra Director Raymond Leppard wanted to teach music at North Central High School," a 1998 editorial in the *Indianapolis News* argued, "he would be barred unless he became a licensed educator." The pool of potential teachers shrunk, and most states soon enacted emergency certification, opening up a back door that still let in unqualified teachers to fill spot shortages. "A growing number of school districts are throwing a warm body into a classroom, closing the door, and hoping for the best," said Education Secretary Richard Riley. In the end, more credentialist hoops failed to capture what matters most to good teaching: the actual ability to convey knowledge in the classroom. What, states were asking, could they do to move away from teacher preparation—coursework and test scores—and instead focus on teacher practices—in-class teaching? What could they do to look the horses in the mouth and figure out who has what it takes to be a good teacher? And then they came up with a radical solution: You watch them teach.

Enter, Stage Right

"Good teaching is one-fourth preparation and three-fourths theatre," reflected author Gail Godwin. Maybe. The Thomas B. Fordham Foundation cited a study that showed that "it was the verbal ability of teachers—not the degrees they had earned or the experience that they possessed—that had the strongest effect on student learning," and this is what schools should screen for when selecting teachers. Many states have focused on credentials (preparation) at the cost of in-class performance (theatre), but the trend seems now to be reversing. Consider the following changes, all of which are recent, and all of which focus on in-class performance.

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• This spring, teachers in California must pass the statewide Teacher Performance Assessment which will oblige them to submit videotapes of their lessons. "That part of it is having a very dramatic impact," said Dennis Evans, director of credentialing programs at the University of California, Irvine. "Every prospective teacher in California going for a credential will have to convince an observer that they're competent and can perform well in front of students."

• Wisconsin, after a five-year effort, has instituted licensing requirements which also take actual classroom performance into account. Previously, any graduate from an education program with a 2.75-plus grade-point average and no criminal record could teach. But now, teacher-candidates must first pass a test in reading, writing, mathematics, and more importantly, also demonstrate speaking and listening skills. "We need to see the ability for teachers to act in a verbal way," said Peter Burke of the Department of Public Instruction. "We are going to videotape teachers." Teachers will assemble an extensive portfolio that includes documentation of all the main tasks of teaching ranging from rating student work to lesson preparation. Wisconsin is part of the Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC), an independent coalition of state education agencies, higher education institutions and national education organizations founded in 1987 partly in response to the scathing "A Nation at Risk" report on teacher preparation four years prior. Over the years, INTASC has worked with some 34 states to define and codify good teaching by developing performance-based standards.

• In Kansas, the state board of education recently supported dispensing with the current practice under which teachers receive a professional teaching license simply by passing a basic skills and subject test and enduring three years in the public schools. Instead, a new plan would require teachers to complete a teacher-preparation program and only then do they receive a two-year provisional license. During this time, under the guidance of a veteran teacher, rookie teachers must complete an extensive portfolio similar to Wisconsin's recording their teaching performance.

Stand and Deliver

Connecticut, where Matthews and Avezzie teach, has pioneered performance-based assessment since 1986 and is a good example of the current changing trend. In the mid-1980s, the state started requiring rookie teachers to complete a portfolio to be submitted to the state for evaluation during their second year of teaching. The requirement centers around performance in authentic teaching tasks, not the hypothetical scenarios posed in exams: Teachers must keep daily lesson logs over a period of seven to 10 days, videotape two lesson segments, and include and analyze examples of student work. They must document the planning, the teaching, and the evaluation of student learning. They are also required to reflect on, and analyze, their own teaching. The portfolio's questions include, "What do you want your students to know and be able to do? Why is this important?" and "What did you learn from this unit about your students as learners and about yourself as a teacher? Overall, what changes would you make in your planning, instruction and/or assessment the next time you teach this unit? Why?"

We should give teachers an extended audition.

But perhaps the most representative feature of the new performance-based paradigm is videotaping, currently practiced in Connecticut and New York with many other states such as Indiana, North Carolina, and Arizona to follow. "We want a lens into their classroom," said Katie Fisk of the Connecticut State Board of Education, who added that trained teachers will watch the tapes and judge, according to ability to organize and implement lessons, understanding of multiple approaches to learning, motivation, and active engagement in learning. "The tapes are a very rich performance sample," said Edith Hunsberger of the New York State Department of Education, because they highlight performance, delivery, and passion of teachers in the classroom. "The good ones are exciting." (Incidentally, videotaping has a positive side effect in encouraging self-reflexive evaluation by teachers themselves. "I found that I never smiled, so you think to yourself, I better make sure I smile," said Caroline Bitterwolf, an elementary school teacher in Moscow, Idaho. "You ask yourself, am I favoring one group over another, do I circulate around the room, can I be heard in the back? You think about things you don't usually think about.") Connecticut evaluates the entire portfolio, grading teachers on a scale of one to four. A two or better qualifies for a provisional license; those scoring below par must resubmit the portfolio in their

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third year of teaching. A second failure bars that teacher from continuing in the public schools. In this sense, the initial licensing acts as an extended audition that gives schools the opportunity to see a teacher in action in an authentic setting before deciding to hire.

This, coupled with assessment based on performance in authentic situations, is the shift to provisional initial licensing. It gives the hiring process of teachers the feel of a trial period, an extended audition, during which beginning teachers are given the chance to succeed or to fail in an authentic classroom setting. The metaphor of the initial license as an extended audition might seem superficial at first—surely academic preparation must always outweigh empty enthusiasm—but educators agree that passion and dedication indicates the presence of academic preparation. "You can have academic mastery with no passion, and that is not effective," said Patricia Graham, education professor at Harvard University in a roundtable discussion in 1999. "[But] it is extremely rare to have passion for an academic subject and not have a degree of mastery."

The provisional license allows for a trial period but also reflects the recognition that teaching is not entirely sink-or-swim; teachers do need some time to adjust. Teachers fresh out of school cannot, after all, be expected to perform like veteran teachers, and programs have recognized this as well. Unlike other professions, such as law or medicine that gradually induct their young by giving them easier assignments at first,

Who's Who

By Susan Threadgill

If **Al Gore** wins, **Justice Antonin Scalia** may resign from the Supreme Court, because he feels "a Gore presidency will eliminate his chance of becoming Chief Justice," writes the *Washingtonian*'s **Kim Eisler**. Eisler adds that Scalia, as the father of nine, also would like to earn more than the $167,900 a year paid Supreme Court justices.

The stories about Skull and Bones, **George W. Bush**'s secret society at Yale, are getting juicier and juicier. *The New York Observer*'s **Ron Rosenbaum** says that one of the society's rituals requires members to lie down in coffins and reveal all about their sex lives. This understandably does not sit too well with their wives and girlfriends. As one of them put it to Rosenbaum, "I objected to 14 guys knowing whether I was a good lay."

Bill Clinton cannot be comforted by the news that **Ken Starr**'s replacement, **Robert Ray**, got his start courtesy of **Hillary Clinton**'s dear friend **Rudolph Giuliani**, not to mention the fact that Ray is adding to his staff of prosecutors—including one from the staff of Representative **Dan Burton**, whom even *The New York Times* concedes is "one of Mr. Clinton's severest critics."

Remember how D.C.'s former Mayor **Marion Barry** was away on a Super Bowl junket when a snowstorm paralyzed Washington? Well this March, just as citizen discontent with torn-up streets was peaking, and people were asking where was **Anthony Williams**, our current mayor was located in Paris. Also in Paris recently was Office of Personnel Management Director **Janice Lachance** who you will recall was found campaigning for **Al Gore** when the most recent Washington snowstorm shut down the federal government. France hasn't been her only stop since Iowa. She's also been to Israel and China. They're never going to be able to say her approach to administration is too hands-on.

The McLaughlin Group, once King of the Hill of Washington talk shows, has fallen on hard times. Its ratings are down 40 percent in the last five years. **Eleanor Clift** is the only old hand left on the panel. **Jack Germond**, **Fred Barnes**, **Pat Buchanan**, **Robert Novak**, and **Morton Kondracke** have all departed. "Germond was the critical loss," a veteran observer tells us. "His common sense and humor provided a balance wheel of sanity for all the bluster and bickering."

Speaking of **Pat Buchanan**, last month **Bill Clinton** told the radio and television correspondents dinner that **Elian Gonzalez** is "the one immigrant Buchanan wants to keep in America."

Who is the richest person in Congress? You guess **Jay Rockefeller**? Wrong. The wealthiest is Rep. **Amo Houghton**. He may be worth $1.6 billion according to *The Hill*'s **John Kruger**. Next comes Senator **John Kerry**, whose wife **Teresa** inherited a bundle from her late husband, Senator **John Heinz**. The Kerrys weigh in at $600 to $700 million.

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teachers are often immediately given the full responsibility of a veteran teacher, and often even more difficult classes as veteran teachers opt for honors classes that are easier to manage. "Where does the belief come from that you can pick someone from a teacher-prep program with basic knowledge and say, now you can teach like an expert?" asked Brian Palmer of the Arizona Department of Education. This is why many school districts, such as Rochester, New York, are giving rookie teachers a mentor to help them adjust to the school and also qualify for a license allowing them to continue teaching.

Follow The Leader

"People always wonder if Rochester is a country club or a city," said Carl O'Connell, coordinator for the mentoring program there. "Trust me, it's a city. It's poor." Thirty-six percent of the population is officially poor, but the school system is a different story. While Recruiting New Teachers, a national non-profit educational research organization in Massachusetts, has found that, in urban districts, new teachers leave at a rate of 50 percent in the first three years, Rochester has retained close to 90 percent of its teachers, which is remarkable considering that, between 1987, when the program was started, and 1996 the city became poor: The percentage of children receiving subsidized lunches increased from 44 percent to 80 percent, yet the dropout rate declined by half. And although test scores have

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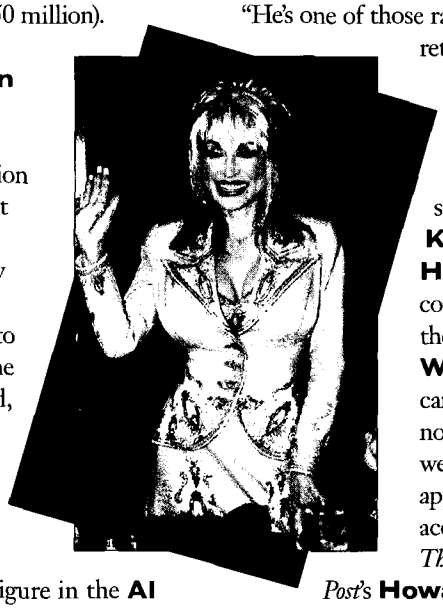
Other legislators who aren't exactly hurting include Senators **Herb Kohl** ($300-$400 million) and Rockefeller ($200-250 million).



Dolly Parton was recently introduced by Secretary of Education **Richard Riley** at an education awards ceremony telecast by C-Span. Explaining that she was trying to dress properly for the occasion, Parton said, "I wanted to look like a businesswoman, not a bull dyke."

The powerful figure in the **Al Gore** campaign you haven't heard of is **Michael Whouley**. Gore calls him his "brain." *The Washington Post*'s **Dana Milbank** says he "has been the campaign's top operative," and Gore spokesperson **Chris Lehane** says "He's the **General Patton** figure. He gets the job done—sometimes indelicately, but always successfully."

Speaking of **Chris Lehane**, he's become a favorite of the press. **Karen Tumulty** of *Time* says "He's one of those rare press secretaries who can actually help you think through a story." **Karen Hughes**, his counterpart in the **George W. Bush** campaign, has not fared so well. Her approach, according to *The Washington Post*'s **Howard Kurtz**, is seen as "cautious, by-the-book, sometimes maddening." She "sticks to the talking points," is "stingy with anecdotes," and "staunchly defends the candidate morning, noon, and night." This may not delight reporters but it makes her very popular with W.

Bay Buchanan is well-known as a dedicated campaigner for her brother, Pat. But for more than a decade she's held another job that may surprise you. She is the treasurer of **Ronald Reagan**'s presidential campaign committee. Reagan may not have run since 1984, but his campaign fund continues. As of last September, it held $494,230. And Buchanan has collected $45,715 in consulting fees and expenses from it. By contrast, subsequent presidential campaign funds, including those of both the 1992 **Bush** and **Clinton** campaigns, have shut down.

James Carville's new book *Stickin': The Case for Loyalty* has this rejoinder to those who say that **Bill Clinton** shouldn't have lied to his friends about **Monica Lewinsky**. "Where I come from, it is sometimes considered honorable to lie about sex. Only a dishonorable person would tell the truth about it. Most people follow this rule about sex: Those that say they did, didn't, and those that say they didn't, did. You're right about 75 percent of the time if you go by that formula. Anyway, if the main thing I have to get over in my life is a friend fibbing to me about sex, then I have had a pretty easy time of it."

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declined slightly, Rochester students perform almost as well and often better than the rest of the state: In 1998, Rochester students outperformed the state on every subject category of the Regents Competency Test. The key to Rochester's program is its mentoring program that helps teachers before they are evaluated for a professional license. "Let me put it like this," said Ann Chazan, a ninth-grade history teacher in Rochester. "If it weren't for this program, those first-year teachers would walk out." Chazan currently is a mentor and helps the beginning teachers, offering advice and support ranging from classroom management to personal advice, helping them to secure materials such as audio-visual equipment, and guiding them through the paperwork. The mentoring process—really a support mechanism to help teachers adjust before the system decides whether or not they should stay on—has positive side effects as well by changing teaching from a very isolated profession into a more collegial endeavor, and has the power to retain teachers who, according to research, reach their maximum potential after three to five years.

Blackboard Theater

The paradigm shift to watching teachers in the class and to giving them a chance to succeed or fail in authentic teaching situations before granting them a professional license is a way to have standards without overly standardizing. "We used to say, we want you to build a race car with this much rubber, this much steel wiring and aluminum," said Tom Hansen of the Indiana Professional Standards Board. "Now we say we want the race car to go this fast and it has to be competitive. We're not going to tell you what to put in it, we're not going to hamstring you. You'll get a better car under the second method."

To be sure, this performance-based paradigm with its focus on authenticity is not without its flaws. First, it is very labor-intensive to apply, making mentoring programs costly. When veteran teachers spend time outside their own classes advising other teachers, they cannot teach in the classroom. Annual costs for mentoring can run as high as $13 billion, according to Richard Rothstein, an education writer for *The American Prospect*. States have also been generally reluctant to fund such programs: Although 28 states mandate or encourage such programs, only 10 provide full or partial funding. Performance assessment is similarly expensive. "It takes 10 times as long to score a videotape as it takes to score an essay," said Hunsberger.

To save labor, schools might simply decentralize the hiring of teachers, putting principals in charge assessing and recommending them for a professional license after a year-long trial period of performance. "We think deregulating the labor market and increasing accountability for administrators is just a more effective approach," said Dale Ballou, professor at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, to *Education Week*. Raising the bar by requiring acceptable in-class performance may reduce the supply of teachers a bit—not everybody, even if they have successfully completed a state-approved education curriculum and passed the entrance exams, will be able to trade their provisional license in for a professional license. This might be a concern in the face of a potential teacher shortage: This year, the U.S. Department of Education predicted a need of 2.2 million new teachers over the next decade, and even though interest in teaching has gone up in the last several years (10 percent of college freshmen are now considering teaching), the shortage is still dire. One-fourth of teachers are over age 50 and will retire just as student enrollment is projected to climb.

But focusing on authentic teacher tasks and in-class performance rather than credentials also has the potential to increase the pool of applicants who come from non-traditional fields. Recently, Education Secretary Richard Riley called for a plan that would provide for alternative certification that relies on exactly performance-based assessment and provisional licensing. Recent college graduates or retired military workers would receive a one-year initial license after passing a basic skills test and having their performance assessed. During this time, the school has the authority to terminate these teachers if they are not deemed adequate. In essence, school administrators can watch if the new teacher has what it takes to succeed in the classroom, and base hiring on such an assessment. After three years, these teachers can apply for a renewable professional license that relies heavily on classroom performance. The program is extremely promising, not only because precedent (the 1994 Troops-to-Teachers program that lets military personnel teach classes) showed participants were much more diverse and willing to teach in high-poverty areas, but also because it promises to increase the potential supply of teachers.

Ultimately, you need to be able to perform if you're going to teach, and teachers should be evaluated by what actually happens in the classroom. It is this mindset that has the greatest potential of finding and letting in the Jaime Escalantes, the Mr. Chipps, and the Mr. Hollands into America's schools. ●

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A Newsroom Hero

Bill Kovach has never backed down from a fight

By Tracy Thompson

When Bill Kovach left Washington in 1986, he was by anybody's definition a true media insider: head of *The New York Times* Washington bureau and on the short list of people who might one day achieve the Holy Grail of journalism and become the paper's executive editor. When the *Times* passed him over, the news that Kovach was leaving town to run *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution* created a sensation in the hermetically sealed orbit inside the Beltway. The day of the announcement, Kovach pulled a bottle of Scotch from his desk for a bittersweet late-afternoon celebration with his staff. They were disconsolate; he was jaunty. "I'm going to fly it into the mountain," he told them, "or I'm going to make it work."

History will record that the plane did indeed fly into the mountain: after a stormy two-year tenure in Atlanta, when the paper won two Pulitzers but Kovach ran afoul of his profit-minded corporate bosses, he left Atlanta to become curator of the Nieman Foundation at Harvard. This summer he's returning to Washington to write books and op-ed pieces—moving back into the same house in Chevy Chase where he and his wife, Lynne, and their four children lived when he was the *Times'* bureau chief. But while the address hasn't changed, everything else has. Reporters don't keep bottles of Scotch in their desks these days unless they want a referral to the Employee Assistance Program, and Kovach is no longer a newsroom bigfoot. He's a press critic—a role that, depending on prevailing opinion, makes him either a priggish elitist or a self-exiled member of an unruly and irresponsible tribe. His complaints are forceful and particular: The rise of the 24-hour news cycle is tempting journalists to abdicate their obligation to sort out gossip from facts, he says, and turning them into mere conduits for a slurry of fact, innuendo, rumor, and opinion. Reporters are forgetting why they got in the business—presumably, it was to expose vice and give voice to the powerless—in their quests for blockbuster stories and the chance to make big bucks as TV pundits. Media mergers threaten to obliterate the line between editorial and advertising. Things have gotten so bad that even *The New York Times* used anonymous sources in roughly a third of its coverage of the Monica Lewinsky story, and *The Washington Post* used them twice as often as that. In other words, we're not just going to hell—you can actually see hell from here.

Hawk-nosed and white-haired at 67, Kovach speaks with a Southern accent that betrays East Tennessee hill country, but the accent is somewhat misleading: In fact, he's the son of Albanian immigrants who settled in Morristown, Tenn. in the 1920s after his father, John, won the lease to the town's Busy Bee Café in a poker game. Albanian culture is, according to ethnic stereotype, argumentative and prone to nurse grudges; in Kovach's case, reality fully conforms to the image. Lynne Kovach recalls that in the early years of their marriage, Bill's fights with his brother Joe would sometimes get so violent she was afraid they would kill each other. After his father died when he was 13, Kovach grew up on the streets "as what you'd call a juvenile delinquent, except for a few teachers in school who kept me in line," he says. He joined the Navy in 1951 straight out of high school and learned to swim and dive during his military service, returning to Johnson City, Tenn. after four years to go to college on the G.I. Bill. His intention was to become a marine biologist, but a summer job at *The Johnson City Press Chronicle* between college and graduate school changed that forever. After only three weeks, he had discovered, he said, "what I was born to do."

The newsroom culture Kovach encountered in the late '50s and early '60s at that job and, later, at the

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Nashville Tennessean could not be more different from newsrooms today, and goes a long way toward explaining Kovach's world view. In those years, the *Tennessean* was a rare example of a Southern newspaper that actually sent reporters to cover civil rights marches. (The much richer and bigger *Atlanta Constitution*, in contrast, didn't—it earned its liberal reputation solely on the basis of Ralph McGill's editorial columns.) At the *Tennessean*, there was a sense in the air that politics mattered on some visceral level, that journalists had a front-row seat at one of the great moral dramas of the century. When Kovach's friend and future *New York Times* colleague Wendell L. Rawls joined the *Tennessean* in 1967, Kovach was already the paper's top political reporter and owned a coveted piece of real estate in the back row of newsroom desks.

With the exception of David Halberstam, a Harvard graduate who had come South to learn the journalism trade, the staff was made up mostly of Southern boys from lower-middle-class backgrounds who saw their mission in life as (a) changing the world and (b) beating *The Nashville Banner* by any means possible, even if it meant trying to distract the competition by calling them with phony news tips. After the last deadline, around 1 a.m., reporters would adjourn to a small room in back, someone would pull out a bottle, and a poker game would start. "People didn't want to leave," Rawls said. "I've seen poker games break up to cover a story, and we didn't even have an edition left—just to be there. The news was everything. The fun was a close second."

Even then, Kovach was known for the sometimes inconvenient lengths to which he would go to defend a principle. Editors found him maddeningly stubborn; on the other hand, when the Tennessee legislature wanted to go into executive session one day, Kovach's adamant refusal to leave even under threat of arrest led to a federal court case which the newspaper won and which eventually led to the nation's first open-meetings law.

"This is a man who never backed down from a fight, ever—even perhaps when that might have been more prudent," says Stephen Engelberg, investigations editor for *The New York Times*, who began his career working for Kovach as a clerk in *The New York Times* Washington bureau in 1979. At the *Times*, a disagreement others might have regarded as just one more office intrigue tended to weigh on him. "It wasn't like Bill to go to the gym after work and lift weights for an hour and forget about it," Engelberg said. "He often did not look physically well. You could see that these things that were gamesmanship to some people to him were his life." At the *Times*, it was at one time a game to turn various names of editors into verbs and give them personality-appropriate definitions. To "Rosenthal," for instance, meant "to cry when somebody else's grandmother dies;" to "Kovach" meant "to approach life as if it were a blood feud."

At the Times

Kovach owed his hiring at the *Times* in 1968 to Scotty Reston, then the paper's executive editor, who decided the paper needed to broaden its talent pool. Reston wrote to friends across the country, asking them to give him the names of the best reporters in their region. One of those friends was Ralph McGill, editorial page editor of the *Atlanta Constitution*, who sent back a list with Kovach's name at the top. Only then did Reston discover that the *Times*' personnel department already had a thick file: Kovach had been sending the paper his clips for five years. Kovach spent two years working on the paper's metro desk, with a simple assignment from Abe Rosenthal: Cover New York City from the point of view of someone who has never seen it before, and keep writing the way you did for the *Tennessean*. To a young man from the rural South, the urban panorama could not have been more exhilarating. "It was like walking into a room full of oxygen," Kovach said later, though he did quarrel with the *Times*' staid copy desk over elements of style. One early battle concerned his description of an overturned abandoned Volkswagen Beetle on FDR Drive, which he described as "belly up," incurring the wrath of a copy editor who deemed the word "belly" too vulgar for *Times* readers. Kovach appealed to Rosenthal, and "belly" made it in. Kovach spent less than a year covering the city before the paper, recognizing his skills as a political reporter, sent him to the Albany bureau to help cover the New York legislature. From there, he made the leap to the national desk, moving to Boston to head the New England bureau—a coveted slot, testimony to his quick rise in the *Times*' hierarchy.

In Boston, Kovach covered the anti-war movement, which had a major headquarters in Cambridge, and had his second major brush with journalistic history when he spent a weekend helping *Times* reporter Neil Sheehan copy the boxes of leaked documents that became known as the "Pentagon Papers." Since it was a weekend and the office bank account was low, Kovach had to write a personal check to cover the costs—which is how, several months later, he came to be standing at his front door early one morning in his underwear being questioned by two FBI agents who wanted to talk to him about the "McNamara Report."

"I said, 'I have no idea what you're talking about, but do you want to come in? Because I'm not standing here in my underwear,'" Kovach recalled. "They said,

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'The Pentagon Papers,' and I said, 'I have nothing to say to you. Come in or I'm shutting the door.'" The FBI men went away and a grand jury was convened, but the Bureau's interest in pursuing Kovach faded once it became clear that Daniel Ellsberg made a much better target. Years later, Kovach said, a source on the Watergate impeachment committee showed him a memo he had come across from FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover to Nixon's chief of staff, H.R. Haldeman. "We have found the leak of the Pentagon Papers," the memo said in part. "It's a *New York Times* reporter named Bill Kowitch (sic)."

The *Times* moved Kovach to its Washington bureau in 1972, where he helped cover the Watergate impeachment hearings before being named news editor in 1974. Two years later, he went back to New York as deputy national editor, then returned to Washington in 1979 to become bureau chief. By then his old mentor, Reston, was a columnist in the Washington bureau. "He would come and sit next to my desk and talk to me about his column or whatever he was working on, but what he was really doing was making himself available in case I had any questions," Kovach said. "He helped me grow into the job of running a bureau, because I had no idea."

Yet once he moved from reporting to editing, Kovach proved to be a popular boss. Reporters sensed in him an old-fashioned military sense of loyalty: Until persuaded otherwise, he began with the assumption that the reporter was right and should be backed to the hilt. Doug Marlette, the editorial cartoonist for *Newsday* who worked for Kovach in Atlanta, recalls one news meeting early in Kovach's tenure there when he was asked what sort of disciplinary measures to take about a staffer who had been arrested for driving under the influence on an out-of-town assignment. Kovach's answer: Bail him out of jail and bring him home. "He may be an asshole," Kovach said, "but he's our asshole." The same attitude was in evidence in the late '70s, when Engelberg was 26 and had just joined the *Times*' Washington bureau as weekend editor. Late one Sunday afternoon, he got a call from an editor in New York: Did the Washington bureau think a particular story was strong enough to lead the Monday morning paper? I think so, Engelberg replied, to which the New York editor said impatiently, "No, I want to know what the bureau thinks." Engelberg called Kovach, who was home mowing his lawn. "Kovach said, 'The next time this happens, put the phone down, wait 10 minutes, then call them back and tell them whatever you think is what I said,'" said Engelberg. "He made me very confident in a job that I had every reason not to be confident in." Over the years, that management philosophy has been repaid in kind: on the day Kovach resigned as editor in Atlanta, reporters in the newsroom pooled their money and bought a full-page ad in their own paper criticizing the publisher's decision to let him go. (They paid cash; the advertising department refused to extend credit.) "I'd walk through hell in gasoline underwear for the guy," says Rawls, who ran the newsroom under Kovach in Atlanta.

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Not His Nature

In some ways, Kovach can be compared with Gen. George S. Patton—a renowned battlefield commander whose career ultimately suffered because he lacked the instincts for internal politics. Certainly that seemed to be the case at the *Times*; Kovach probably would have won a newsroom election picking the successor to Abe Rosenthal, but lost out to the more cerebral Max Frankel, who had earned more of Rosenthal's trust. Frankel was also better than Kovach at what might be called the diplomatic side of a newspaper editor's life: the social events and charitable causes that come along with a job as a high-ranking *Times* editor. When it came to after-work socializing, Kovach usually didn't see the point. As Washington bureau chief, he said, "I tried to stay in touch with people I thought could help me understand Washington. I went to dinner at Katharine Graham's house a couple of times. But I was not part of the social set. It was not my nature."

That attitude may have hurt him in Atlanta, a businessman's town where the ability to make money, or to cultivate those who know how, carries more social currency than artistic or intellectual achievement. In Atlanta, Kovach earned notoriety for turning down a chance to dine at the home of the chairman of Coca-Cola not once, but twice—a faux pas that, in Atlanta terms, is the equivalent of declining an audience with the Pope. (Kovach says he was out of town both times.)

The Atlanta business and political elite did not know what to make of Kovach: here was this Southern editor with a decidedly un-good-old-boy way of approaching

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the news. Early in Kovach's tenure, a story broke about a local civil rights leader who had developed a cocaine habit, a fact that came to light when he, his wife and his drug supplier got into a fight in the driveway of their home. A delegation of black leaders arrived in Kovach's office to ask him to hold the story because it would embarrass the man in question and would, they said, reflect poorly on their community. It was a request they had every reason to expect would be honored; the Atlanta papers had a long history of ignoring the city's black community. To their surprise, Kovach refused. The issue, he said, was not the scandalous details, but the fact that Atlanta police were not vigorously pursuing the case—and besides, if the person involved had been a prominent white community leader, he would no doubt run the story, and he didn't propose to judge blacks by a different news standard. The black delegation went away disgruntled that day, but soon discovered that the same inflexible standard applied elsewhere, too: In the time Kovach was in Atlanta, an aggressive recruitment drive raised the number of minorities on the paper's reporting staff from 10 to 17 percent.

Atlanta

To many *Journal-Constitution* reporters, Kovach's arrival was cause for celebration. The paper's previous editor, Jim Minter, had been reclusive, given to cryptic two-sentence memos and unceremonious firings of reporters who displeased him, often for reasons the reporter himself was not sure about. To a staff browbeaten into habitual timidity, Kovach's reputation as an editor who would actually back them up was almost too good to be true. "I've always wanted to go to *The New York Times*," said one long-time reporter, summing up the moment's general giddiness, "and now *The New York Times* is coming to me." In the journalism world, Atlanta was suddenly a talent magnet. One of the new reporters Kovach hired was a lanky Tennessean named Bill Dedman with a knack for deciphering financial data, who began an exhaustive computer-assisted study of the home mortgage lending practices of Atlanta's banks. The results showed a systematic pattern of discriminatory practices which made home loans more expensive for black families and which in many cases prevented them from buying houses at all. Dedman's series, "The Color of Money," won a 1989 Pulitzer Prize for investigative reporting—the first reporting Pulitzer the Atlanta papers had earned in 20 years. One year earlier, Doug Marlette had won a Pulitzer for his incendiary editorial cartoons, and the paper also had an unprecedented five Pulitzer finalists. In the aftermath of "The Color of Money" series, a consortium of Atlanta banks pooled their resources to offer $150 million in home mortgage loans to the city's minority communities.

"If there's one thing that is a hallmark of Kovach's journalistic creed, it is that the role of the newspaper was to make a difference in the lives of the readers," said Rawls. On the day that the bank consortium announced their $150 million loan pool, he recalled, "I came in [Kovach's] office and he had this huge grin on his face, and he came over and hugged me and he said, 'We made a difference, by God.' And I'll never forget that."

Yet, in the end, it was another intrinsic part of Kovach's personality—his difficulty in backing down from a fight—which was the proximate cause of his resignation, which came about in a November 1988 confrontation with Publisher Jay Smith over a minor dispute involving the paper's Washington bureau. The dispute arose in an atmosphere of distrust between Kovach and the corporate higher-ups; just weeks earlier, while Kovach and his wife were on vacation in Italy, the corporate office announced draconian cutbacks in the newsroom budget, even though they had promised Kovach to make no major changes while he was gone. Kovach had already decided his days were numbered-though, he said, "I determined then to stay on for another year and prove I could take their journalism-on-the-cheap budget and still put out a great newspaper."

But then the Washington bureau flap arose. Even though the Atlanta papers were the flagship of the Cox chain, the Washington bureau was run by the corporate side, which put the editors in Atlanta in the odd position of having little direct control over the paper's most important bureau. Kovach had been lobbying to change that, and in early November had at last won a promise from his corporate bosses that after the elections, he would take charge of a major reorganization of the bureau. At the same time, he had also won permission to hire a particular photographer he knew from his Washington days to run the photo department in Atlanta.

Concerned about other job offers his candidate was entertaining, Kovach called the same day to ask him to sit tight, that a formal job offer was imminent. The next day, the photographer was having lunch with a friend from the Cox Bureau and let slip a remark about possible "changes" in the bureau. That ignited a gossip hotline which led directly to the office of bureau chief Andrew Glass, who knew Kovach did not like him. Glass immediately telephoned Smith demanding an explanation, and Smith in turn called Kovach into his office to demand that the rumors about the Washington bureau be stopped. "What rumors?" Kovach reportedly asked, not knowing about the lunch. The conversation escalat-

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ed rapidly, with Smith implying that Kovach was the source of the rumors and Kovach heatedly disclaiming any knowledge, until at last Kovach said testily—as he had on a couple of earlier occasions—"If you don't trust me any more than that, then maybe I ought to quit." This time, Smith stunned him by replying, "I accept"—apparently having expected Kovach to say, "I resign." Kovach, losing whatever tenuous hold he had on his temper, snapped, "Then you can take this newspaper and shove it up your ass," and stormed out. Kovach's closest friends—Rawls chief among them—maintain that the incident was a set-up, that Kovach's enemies in the Cox corporate hierarchy were trying to pick a fight so they could get rid of an editor they regarded as not a team player.

The Newspaper Business

The corporate bosses were right about that: Kovach was not on their team. His idealistic vision of what the Atlanta papers could accomplish ran counter to the commercial instincts of Cox Enterprises—a bottom-line, diversified organization that viewed its biggest cash cow, the Atlanta papers, as simply the most valuable of its many products. Kovach had been hired by Garner Anthony, the husband of Barbara Cox Anthony, who with her sister, Ann Cox Chambers, owned the entire Cox chain. But Kovach had never been liked or trusted by the corporate people below Anthony, and when a family squabble forced Anthony out of his corporate responsibilities not long before the November 1988 showdown, Kovach lost the only person in the Cox hierarchy who sympathized with what he wanted to do. What he wanted to do was not just expensive, it did not at all fit the *USA Today*-style formula Cox management wanted—short stories, lots of bright graphics, celebrity news and reader-friendly features. "They never had the faith," Rawls said later, "that a superior product would attract a buyer."

Kovach's vision also ran counter to forces outside the paper which were already subtly altering the way reporters saw their jobs. Rawls remembers, "the first thing the business editor would talk about at news meetings was how the Dow closed." At the time, Rawls says, this was puzzling to him and Kovach. Talking about the Dow closing number was about as exciting as talking about the ambient temperature: exciting only in extremes. But in a decade in which more and more employers were converting pension funds into 401Ks, Wall Street was beginning to take on a personal significance to people. It was happening inside newsrooms, too: The big chains, like Gannett, were beginning to be publicly traded, most reporters had 401Ks that owned a piece of their own newspaper's stock, and upper-level editors were being rewarded with even juicier stock options. The professional mores of the Huntley-Brinkley era were entering the age of AOL/Time Warner; shareholders began competing with readers for reporters' allegiance, if for no other reason than reporters were becoming shareholders themselves.

"It was the development of a world that looked on the audience of journalists essentially as consumers," Kovach says now. "But the minute you reduce journalism to commerce, it's lost its utility to a democratic society."

Warp Speed

That was a train of thought he had plenty of time to explore and amplify over the next decade, though not in the tumult of the newsroom. News of Kovach's resignation had hardly hit the *AP* wire when he got a telephone call from his old friend Howard Simons, then the curator of the Nieman Foundation at Harvard. Simons, who was ill with what turned out to be terminal cancer, was thinking seriously of resigning; was Kovach interested in his job? For Kovach, who had hardly planned to be leaving daily journalism at the relatively young age of 55, the transition to academia was at first wrenching. Others see it as fortuitous. "I think it was great that he wound up where he did, at Harvard," says *Newsday*'s

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Marlette. "I don't think he can have a good influence anymore within the system."

What Marlette is referring to has become Kovach's major theme as a press critic: the distortion of journalistic standards by commercial pressures. In his latest book, *Warp Speed: America in the Age of Mixed Media* (co-authored with Tom Rosenstiel), Kovach argues that the current fixation on profit margins and market share in most of today's news media has fostered an unhealthy competition among news outlets to pursue sensational blockbuster stories and to ignore subjects that may be more complex or harder to present. News has become a kind of infotainment; Monica Lewinsky was merely the inside-the-Beltway version of O.J. Simpson. It's a process, he thinks, in which technology has greased the skids. The Internet has erased any time journalists once had to deliberate and evaluate facts before somebody makes them public. The proliferating number of news outlets makes it a seller's market for news sources, who can spin with impunity because reporters depend on them more than ever. The need to fill in the empty spaces in a 24-hour news cycle blankets the airways with empty blather and polarizing argument, much of it offered by reporters who have signed fat television contracts to offer instant "analysis" on events of the day.

If you want to make yourself unpopular in Washington media circles, this is the way to go. Journalists are notoriously thin-skinned—especially inside the Beltway, where being at important events is often confused with being important, and egos are as beautiful and various as soap bubbles. "A lot of my old colleagues have changed their opinion about my value to journalism," Kovach says, which may be an understatement. For example, he says, he and *New York Times* columnist Maureen Dowd are no longer on speaking terms. (Dowd says she has "the highest admiration" for Kovach, but that he hurt her feelings some years ago when he was quoted as saying her news stories appealed more to the emotions than the intellect. "It sounded to me like he was saying I write like a girl.") Still, the ranks of the press exiles are growing.

In recent years, a striking number of reporters have walked away from prestigious jobs, citing their disillusionment with the business: Paul Taylor, formerly of *The Washington Post*, for example; Tom Rosenstiel, formerly of the *Los Angeles Times*; Deborah Potter, formerly of *CBS* and *CNN*. The refugees "are beginning to coalesce into a tangible movement," writes Howard Kurtz, press critic at the *Post*, but that has not made them popular with their former colleagues. What Kovach and his fellow critics are saying "can be very useful in terms of constructive criticism, but it can also strike some journalists as a tad self-righteous," Kurtz adds.

In fact, some of Kovach's targets say he sounds like a man railing at the incoming tide for getting his ankles wet. "It does seem a little priggish and a little out of touch with reality," says Michael Isikoff, the *Newsweek* correspondent who broke the Monica Lewinsky story and who has been taken to task by Kovach in print for signing a lucrative television contract. "The fact is we live in a commercial world where the market for what we've done traditionally isn't what it used to be." He laughs. "We're all working for dinosaurs, anyway."

Isikoff's last remark is a common sentiment these days in the print media, where editors nervously discuss market penetration and how to beef up coverage in the suburbs. At smaller papers, the anxiety takes the form of staff cutbacks, front page redesigns and gimmicks designed to catch the reader's eye, but even more prestigious dailies have been nervous for a while.

At *The Washington Post*, for example, a stream of memos from Managing Editor Steve Coll in the last year and a half have tried to whip up the enthusiasm of the troops for better writing, more precise and inclusive reporting, stories that have zest and sparkle. But the memos go to a staff that is, by industry standards, exceptionally well-paid and who in many cases come from the educated middle-class—people who have never worked at Wal-Mart and have never known anybody who does. Sensing their growing disconnection from their audience, papers like the *Post* now place great emphasis on diversity in hiring, in an effort to better reflect different segments of society, different mores, and points of view. But worthwhile as that goal is, Kovach points out, it inevitably reflects the fragmentation of society at large. And that makes it harder for the press to play the role it began to assume during the civil rights movement—to be the forum where various factions can reach some kind of consensus on what social problems need addressing, and what to do.

So what is to be done? Kovach and Rosenstiel devote only one chapter of *Warp Speed* to answering that question, and their answer boils down to values: News organizations need to decide what their values are, and make those values clear to both their reporters and their readers. Exactly what those values should be the book doesn't say—Kovach says he and Rosenstiel are addressing that question in a book they are working on now—but a guide to the answer Kovach has in mind lies in the attitudes he developed as a reporter in the South during the civil rights movement. "The civil rights movement forced journalists of my generation to confront a social problem," he said. And once that happened, "the scales fell from our eyes." The job of journalists then, he said, was

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to show the rest of the country how big a price it had paid for the evils of segregation—in short, to tell the truth. It's a concept prominently mentioned in the work he has done in the last two years with the Committee of Concerned Journalists, a group that's been conducting forums around the country involving 3,000 journalists from every segment of the media. The group has come up with a set of written principles it thinks should govern news reporting. Reporters have an obligation to the truth, and to put the interest of the readers before anything else; they must monitor power and give voice to the voiceless and to provide a forum for the public; they must use ethical means of verifying the facts; they must maintain their independence from factions and make the news engaging, relevant, comprehensive and proportional. And, above all, they must remain true to their personal conscience.

The idea of some kind of journalistic mission statement is not new: Adolph Ochs' ethical credo is still printed at the top of every *New York Times*, and Eugene Meyer's is on the wall of the lobby of *The Washington Post*. Still, it's a measure of the cynicism of our times that mentioning a devotion to the truth makes one immediately suspect as some kind of ideologue. And many journalists today resist the idea of a written set of values for other reasons: its potential use in litigation (a reason Kovach finds irritatingly wimpy) and, more importantly, the fact that real life is inevitably too messy to be contained in any one-page statement. When *CBS* "Sixty Minutes" producer Lowell Bergman knows he has a news source with proof that tobacco companies deliberately tweaked their product to increase its addictive potential, but who is bound by a private confidentiality agreement, does he not enlist the help of a state prosecutor to get that information into a public record—even if, by doing so, he becomes part of the story? When *The Washington Post* has the contents of President Clinton's deposition testimony in a matter that involves possible impeachment, does it not tell its readers because the information came from an anonymous source?

"I don't know how you not run those stories," says Bob Woodward, an assistant managing editor at the Post. "If [Kovach] was down in the trenches doing it, he pretty much would have done the same thing."

Well, maybe. Probably, in fact. But the difference, Kovach argues, is that he would have let readers and viewers know exactly what was done to get those stories, why it was done, and what standards were used to judge the newsworthiness of a story. "Transparency does two things—it levels with the recipient of the information and it forces the journalist to seriously examine his principles," he says. There will inevitably be times when circumstances seem to dictate the violation of one principle or another, he acknowledges. In such cases, "the reporter balances the public interest against the spirit of the principle" and decides which wins out.

But news is a business that does not breed this kind of deliberative thinking; there's always the next day's paper to get out, the broadcast coming up in 10 minutes. Buffeted by the whirlwind of the 24-hour news cycle, what journalist could possibly keep his balance on such an ethical tightrope?

"Bullshit," Kovach says, pungently. "That's just a cheap argument to avoid confronting the issue." ●

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War, Money and American Memory: Myths of Virtue, Valor and Patriotism

By Richard Earley

When hearing Chou En Lai still hated the Japanese, the most influential newsman of his generation, Scotty Reston, was aghast and remarked of his pride in the defining American quality that "we have no memory". This failure proved to Reston we were a forward-looking people. This book was written for intelligent persons willing to face disturbing facts. They question the American lack of historical perspective and feel this deficiency is a national disgrace. These people probably agree with Nietzsche, Keynes, and Stalin that an alliance between Germans and Russians would be momentous and far more important than what occurs between Israelis and Arabs. Quite likely they feel Japan and an expanding China will be far more important to the United States than events near the Jordan River that obsess much of the American media. As Solzhenitsyn told the assembled at Harvard, truth is invariably bitter and not the cant that it is beautiful and makes one free. Chou En Lai also told Reston the United States suffered comparatively little in both World Wars and benefited greatly. Many intelligent Europeans have agreed with him. Anti-Americanism will be alive and well in the next millennium.

- Americans have long had a highly inflated opinion of themselves as warriors and as a people of noble character. In the popular culture the great lie the Civil War purged original sin from the country still prevails. Cultural standard bearers missed that war and ensuing wars. Harsh truths reveal Americans as poor soldiers and not particularly brave as a people. Yale and Harvard men (to include Robber Barons) declined to serve in proportional numbers. Charles William Eliot, most influential Harvard president of all, escaped to Europe. Yet in later years he would exhort his charges on the nobility of war and the duties of an aristocracy to lead in battle. Samuel Eliot Morison deliberately obscured Harvard's minimal contribution. Yale was even worse. African-Americans have a highly exaggerated recall of their participation in that war as in all wars. Documenting absence of Jews from American battlefields and refusal to use euphemisms precluded printing of this book by establishment publisher. Fellow countrymen died at rate of 6 to 7 times that of Jews during Civil War. A similar pattern followed in ensuing wars. Roman Catholics maligned by James McPherson as not contributing "fair share" of dead to that war, but as usual their hierarchy has refused to fight back.
- The American contribution to defeat of Germany in both wars has been highly exaggerated. America followed W.C. Fields' advice and kicked the Germans when down. American ineptitude at Kasserine Pass in first European battle of WWII was so great Omar Bradley thought Ike's relief was warranted. More Americans were missing in action after that battle than in 8 years of war in Vietnam. Just before that debacle Red Army had won the decisive battle of Stalingrad. British leaders Montgomery and Brooke regarded Ike a dolt. George Marshall lamented the distinct superiority of the German soldier to the American GI in both wars. American weapons for the Army were inferior in both world wars. Most Americans, including Milton Friedman, who has not completely understood Adam Smith, readily believe we suffered and behaved gallantly in World War II.
- Malicious misrepresentation of American casualties in Vietnam War by Pentagon denigrated extent of sacrifice of troops. Some 15 years after war's end CBS correspondent Morley Safer lied and apologized for North Vietnamese massacre of thousands at Hue.
- George Bush lacked integrity to state war against Iraq was for oil. Congressman Tom Lantos elected on premise Israel needed a friend in the American Congress arranged perjured testimony by Kuwaiti Ambassador's daughter to lead America into war. Lives of American soldiers mattered little to Lantos and friends.
- Don Hewitt, producer of CBS's *60 Minutes* television program, claimed his program's interview of Mr. and Mrs. Clinton in 1992 concerning a romantic liaison with Gennifer Flowers won Clinton the election. On television Mr. Clinton successfully lied about any sexual involvement with Miss Flowers. Later in a court deposition he did admit to having sex with her. Much earlier Mr. Hewitt produced first and to many deciding debate between Nixon and JFK. Nixon committed the ultimate political sin. He looked bad on TV. David Ben-Gurion said JFK admitted to him that JFK owed his election to New York Jews. Then JFK asked Ben-Gurion what he and Israel wanted. Bill Clinton did much the same when his time came.
- Rabid anti-Communists almost to a man turned their backs when asked to bear arms and confront tormentors. Prior to Gulf War William F. Buckley twice berated a Midwest professor who expressed concern for his marine son. Buckley referred to his own son's avoidance of service in Vietnam as due to a "providential affliction" which led to a "valuable ineligibility". G. Gordon Liddy felt war in Korea did not meet his high standard of fighting the Red Army on the European plain and refrained from going to Asia. Mr. Liddy kept the sky of New York City clear of Soviet bombers.
- America has insulted and humiliated China for over a century. Mao discoursed to Marine General Evans Carlson on American greed in supplying Japanese. America has forgotten our complicity in deaths of Chinese. China reminded Japanese Prime Minister Murayama that China held Japan responsible for deaths of 35 million Chinese. A Pulitzer Prize winning New York *Times* reporter revised that number down to 10 million. No letters were printed questioning the accounting of the missing 25 million lives. Great post-war covenant has been Japanese wanting their barbarity to be forgotten while Jews wish to be remembered as the only ones who suffered. This book examines the lies and willfully misleading slant in popular history and how it benefits the rich and powerful. Presently insidious forces are preparing the United States for a military confrontation with China.

If ordered from below, price of the book is $27.95 less 20%, plus shipping which comes to $26.00.

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One Eye On The Exit

A guide for moving from the West Wing to the real world

BY NICHOLAS THOMPSON

WHEN YOU WORK IN THE WHITE House, everyone returns your calls. You make decisions that are broadcast on the six o'clock news. You get there early in the morning; you leave late; you probably chain-drink cups of coffee. You bear the burden of breaking scandals, possible wars, and whether the President has the right make-up on. Your family and friends envy the glorious life they think you live because they've watched *NBC*'s "The West Wing." It's a great job, but there's one problem: Most White House aides don't last very long.

From the chief of staff to the most obscure policy advisor, White House staffers show up with bubbling idealism, great expectations, and seemingly unlimited vigor. Then, usually within 18 months, they're out. Although a few stick around until a new president has been elected and the moving vans roll up, most others call it quits much sooner—after they lose a power struggle, burn out, or just decide they need some more time at home or money in the bank.

Those who came from law firms or academia usually glide right back to an enhanced version of whatever they left. Others face a grimmer task. Once you've been in the White House, that old job in the ad agency or in the house minority leader's office doesn't look so appealing. You've been in the center of the world for too long with too much influence. There are some good jobs available—Washington rain-makers, insightful pundits, non-profit chairmen—but it's not easy to get one and many former executive-branch aides stumble and end up simply outlining books that never get written and sinking into careers that never get kicking.

What can you do to make sure you succeed and don't drift into oblivion? You've got to figure out the elaborate courtship rituals practiced by ex-executive aides and their employers, learn the rules of the Washington reputation game, and dodge the many landmines scattered outside the White House gates. None of this is easy; but none of it is impossible. So read on and study the following ten *Washington Monthly* commandments for navigating the post-White House world. We can't guarantee that all readers will exit this great Washington mating game with a perfect partner; but we can guarantee that you won't end up forced to spend the next decade as a fading lobbyist arguing that refrigerator coolants really don't harm the ozone layer.

Commandment #1: Plan ahead while you're in.

If you've worked close to the president, you don't have the most directly employable skills. You've learned how to spin, you can probably rattle off the names of dozens of foreign leaders and the chairmen of assorted congressional subcommittees, and you can probably make great cocktail-party arguments for or against free trade (or both). These aren't useless talents; but they don't guarantee smooth sailing into another career. Remember, as former Bush speech writer Tony Snow says, "You're far more interesting when you're in the White House than when you're out."

How do you get around this? The best way is to plan your transition out in two steps. First, move to a related job in the government, a little further from the White House but where you can actually be in charge of something—a great boost for your resumé. Clinton Communications Director Mark Gearan first moved over to run the Peace Corps and then moved from that leadership position to the presidency of Hobart and William Smith colleges. James Baker made the transition internally: engineering a switch out of the job as Reagan's chief of staff to head the Treasury Department and, in due course, the Department of State.

If, however, you only have a chance to think one step ahead, find a specialty while you're in the White House—something that people on the outside care about. If you spend two years restructuring the internal presidential mail system, you're apt to spend the next two years expediting the invoice electronics at Wal-

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Mart. If, however, you work as the president's domestic policy advisor for communications, you'll be handed a sack of generous and exciting offers the minute you're out the door.

This lesson seems to have been at least partly learned by the Clinton crowd. On February 15th, the CEOs of high-flying technology companies like Yahoo!, Cisco, and AOL came to the White House to talk about Internet security. When the executives showed up, according to one presidential aide, "the room got a little bit crowded." Most of the chairs in the room had been assigned, but a few were left open and ambitious presidential staffers jockeyed around them. When the president came in, signaling that it was time to sit down, "it was like a game of musical chairs."

Commandment #2: Test The Waters.

If you're thinking about leaving soon, have someone trustworthy start to spread subtle rumors that you might be thinking of moving on. Perhaps your boss will get wind of it and promote you; perhaps your job description will suddenly change for the better. If no one responds to the rumors, or if your colleagues start dropping "help wanted" announcements at your desk and mentioning "a couple great places to work in Cleveland," you'll at least have a clear sign that it's time to hit the road.

The other advantage of spreading rumors is that you might get an offer from the outside. In fact, according to one senior presidential advisor, a common White House strategy is to "leak word that you're thinking of leaving and then wait and see if the calls come in." Most frequently, according to the advisor, the leaking goes through Al Kamen at *The Washington Post*—his "In the Loop" column "serves as a kind of village green for us."

The danger, of course, is that you'll alienate your friends and irritate colleagues who are thinking about leaving while stridently pretending that they're not. But history indicates that the consequences are more embarrassing than fatal. Doug Sosnik, a senior Clinton advisor, announced that he was leaving, stumbled, announced he was leaving, stumbled again, and didn't get out the door for three years. What happened to him? Although he ended up the butt of years worth of White House jokes, he was still promoted, given the most coveted office in the West Wing, and ultimately ended up in a good job with the National Basketball Association.

Commandment #3: Leave on a high note.

If possible, leave while your boss is still the center of attention and flying high. Exit then and your contacts on the inside will be valuable, you'll catch some of number one's glitter, and you'll be able to distance yourself if and when the commander in chief starts to slide. It's like the stock market. You want to buy low, sell high, and cash in before the inevitable crash comes.

But if fate denies you a high note, you can still parlay your departure into a press story that will give your next career a little bounce. An easy bet is leaking the news that you're hitting the road to Al Kamen. But if you aim higher, go for a feature profile in a major newspaper. White House spin-meisters, particularly Clinton's, seem to love calling reporters and smoothing their colleagues' transitions to the real world. Here's *The Chicago Tribune* gushing on about former domestic policy advisor Rahm Emanuel just after he left to take a job investment banking: "His rabid, 'round-the-clock work ethic once earned Emanuel the nickname he'll never shake, Rahmbo. But he cut short a reporter's 7:30 p.m. phone call last week because he wanted to share a quiet dinner with his wife. ...There would be something almost corny about seeing this Chicago-born son of an immigrant pediatrician and a social worker take his street smarts and non-Ivy League education and make it big. Not once, but twice. First in politics, and now in business. And he's not yet 40."

Commandment #4: If you can't get out at the right time, stick around.

If you can't leave on a high note and you can't sell while your stock is going up—maybe it's just too late in the term or maybe, as with Nixon, it's clear that Black Monday isn't going to be followed by Sunny Tuesday or any day—stick around until the end and help the departing president pack his bags and fold his socks. Loyalty has value and, in the last few months of an administration, promotions are dished out like Halloween candy. If you want to be chief of staff but you don't want to wend your way up the hierarchy, come on strong at the end. In the last nine months of an administration, a little diligence and loyalty may give you a shot. Lyndon Johnson appointed Jim Jones, a little-known 29-year-old as chief of staff in the dying days of his administration. Jones later turned his prominence into a career in Congress, a route followed by future Bush secretary of defense, Dick Cheney—an unknown but ambitious 34-year-old Congressional aide when Gerald Ford appointed him chief of staff. Beth Nolan is now President Clinton's White House counsel. Who is Beth Nolan? Just wait.

Commandment #5: Criticism should only be used if you've left on principle.

No one's ever entirely satisfied with his or her experience in the halls of power. Inevitably there are squab-

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bles, jealousies, disagreements, and scores to settle down the road. Our advice for dealing with that? Forget it—or at least don't write a self-serving memoir. The jeremiads of White House aides flow tiredly together. The author is always on the side of the good, whispering the predictable and critical (if not always heeded) information directly into the president's ear, and few people really want to read another recounting that runs along the lines of: "As we sat in the White House war room and listened to President Johnson, one thought kept coming back to me: We'll never win this war in Southeast Asia. I later drafted a memo to the president detailing my reasoning but foolishly discarded it out of loyalty after I was chastised, during one of our daily coffee meetings in my spacious West Wing office, by the secretary of state, the secretary of defense, and the chief of staff."

As a rule, therefore, you should only write a critical book if you've had the courage to leave on principle and put your own job on the line for your beliefs. If you haven't done that, if your disagreements weren't worth that sacrifice, you should probably keep quiet. If you don't, your account is likely to blend into the crowd and leap straight from the shelves of Kramer's Bookstore into the $1.99 remainder bins.

Commandment #6: Aim your criticism with care.

Admittedly, there is one major problem with commandment #5: No one ever leaves the White House on principle. The only exception in a generation was Jerry terHorst, who quit as President Ford's press secretary after his boss pardoned Richard Nixon. Thus, although we can hope for more gallant souls like terHorst, a more practical rule for aspiring authors is perhaps that anyone even thinking about writing a book and settling scores should approach the task with extreme caution—along the lines of defusing a grenade. It is possible to make money through a personalized and critical account, but beware: you can burn your friendships, your future support network, and quite possibly your own reputation. And, if that doesn't happen, it might well just be because few people read what you wrote.

After Reagan's budget director David Stockman wrote a book pillorying his former administration, *The Washington Post* asked him whether he had any friends left in Washington. "Yeah … and I've heard from both of them." George Stephanopoulos has suffered a similar, if not as acute, fate—though he had the keen sense to line up a spot as a pundit before releasing his book. What's worse, White House memoirs often get scoured for potential self-inflicted wounds and those trying to throw stones often drop the largest ones on their own feet. When Press Secretary Larry Speakes published his memoir of the Reagan years, the only thing that plummeted faster than the book was the author. Speakes had infelicitously revealed that he had made up quotes for President Reagan and was soon fired from his job as press spokesman for Merrill Lynch when callers started demanding to know if he was making up quotes there too.

Commandment #7: Stay Humble.

When you're inside, you want the world to think you're competent; you want to be photographed near the president with a grim look on your face. You want to be described as "an influential and trusted confidant with street smarts." But remember, the president is in charge and everybody is supposed to be working for him. If you fill your balloon with too much air, someone will surely stick a pin in it.

Peggy Noonan, Bush's and Reagan's speech-writer, lost her patience with being in the background and began to let everyone know that she was responsible for the great presidential lines. Her colleagues turned their backs. John Sununu, Bush's Chief of Staff, suffered the same fate—he seemed to only understand the first half of the old saw that the chief of staff is "president without the credit"—and was unceremoniously fired.

Outside the White House, you face the same balancing act. You have to remember that you weren't the president and, now that you're out, you're the same person that you were before you went in. The latter point is particularly difficult since, after working at the center of the world for a while, you tend to spend a few extra minutes looking in the mirror each day and it's possible to confuse your position and prestige with yourself. You tend to forget that when Jim Smith is in the White House, Stephen Spielberg returns his calls because he's in the White House, not because he's Jim Smith.

If you don't believe that this self-importance disease can strike anyone, consider this letter sent by a former White House aide. The aide, an apparently humble chap when he came to the White House, penned it after deciding to leave Stanford's Graduate School of Business after one year to take a job with a company chaired by his former boss, Clinton's ex-chief of staff Erskine Bowles: "After a painful two weeks of consideration and consultation with mentors, family, and friends, I have decided to formally withdraw from Stanford Business School … [I] leave knowing that I have given my all to the GSB community … I am especially proud of the Tuesday Coffee Breaks I insti-

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gated in attempt to strengthen relations between the students and the faculty and administration. As a columnist for *The Reporter*, I have tried to touch the GSB community with wit and humor. As a student, I have earned high marks in most all of my classes and have been a vocal contributor ... I will miss all of you dearly. But, I am serious about returning. Thank you all for making me stronger."

Commandment #8: Don't flaunt your money.

White House officials don't make a ton of money: Top aides earn less than Yale Law School graduates just starting careers in New York firms. But if you resent this and you leave thinking about gold, tread carefully. If you slick back your hair and declare that you want to make millions in order to buy a block in Georgetown, old friends working in the trenches of public service will spurn you. You'll look like you've lost your core values or, worse, never had them at all. Leon Panetta, Clinton's former chief of staff says: "Making lots of money means that, in one way or another, you have to sell a little bit of your soul."

This rule has been fairly well-learned in Washington and people who leave to scoop up the dough keep quiet. Folks who hop onto the money train, "want to spend more time with their families." If they do the devil's work for the tobacco industry, they're "trying to find the middle ground." If they defend the Burmese junta's right to enslave ethnic minorities, they "believe that everyone should have their day in court." Other aides try to hedge their bets by serving on public housing committees or announcing that they're only making money so that they can prepare for a run for public office.

This step is a little easier for Republicans than for Democrats because, as Alice Rivlin, Clinton's former budget director, said, "Republicans are a little more business-oriented." Paul Begala, Clinton's former advisor puts a slightly finer edge on it: "Republicans think they're better than you because they're rich and think they're rich because they're better than you."

Commandment #9: Don't flaunt your access.

Just as you shouldn't flaunt your money, you shouldn't make it look like you just stopped off at the executive mansion to build credentials and make contacts for future influence-peddling. Power is the lifeblood of Washington, it's tempting to advertise how influential you are, and it's quite possible to get away with a fair amount. Still, there is definitely a line that can be crossed, and the penalties for crossing it are harsh indeed. Yes, you can work to be profiled in the *National Journal* and you can persuade your confidantes to spread the word at downtown luncheon clubs that you golfed with the president on Saturday and changed his mind on welfare reform. But if you wear your access on your sleeve, your colleagues will call for the guillotine. Make the profession look bad and the penalty is the wrath of Mammon.

The poster boy of this phenomenon is Michael Deaver. Ronald Reagan's factotum, Deaver left the administration to start his own consulting organization in 1985. Millions of dollars started to pour in and the formerly down-to-earth guy was sucked into the world of access. Soon, he was captured posing leaning back in a limousine, talking into a cell phone with the Capitol dome in the background, for the cover of *Time* magazine and a story titled: "Influence Peddling in Washington."

He had crossed the line. Other Washington access-experts reacted with indignation, representatives on the Hill were disgusted: Deaver was the subject of countless rumors and, soon enough, investigations by the GAO, Congress, and the Justice Department. Within a few months, his business had fallen apart and he was eventually sentenced to 1,500 hours of community service.

Commandment #10: Remember Your fallbacks.

Enough people have suffered through post-White House-departure syndrome that there's a system designed to bail you out if you get stuck. If worse comes to worst—you leave at the wrong time, you don't have anything lined up and you aren't sure what you want to do—look for a parking place. Certain institutions seem designed specifically to offer gas, food, and lodging to ex-White House aides and are more than happy to house someone whose "professional experience" section of their resume ends in 1986. For Republicans, there's the Hoover Institution, the Richard Mellon Scaife magazine empire, the Heritage Foundation, and the American Enterprise Institute where former Reagan officials John Bolton and Michael Ledeen now work. For Democrats, there's the Brookings Institution, The Council on Foreign Relations, or Harvard's Kennedy School. The latter recently became the temporary home of former Clinton communications director Donald Baer and chief speechwriter Michael Waldman, two senior aides to Clinton who ended up unsure about their next steps.

What if you can't even find a parking spot? It's not likely, but if you're completely stuck, your best bet is to just leave town and try something new. Donald

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Regan, Reagan's chief of staff, had his head put on the chopping block during Iran-Contra, failed in an attempt at a vindictive book and couldn't get back on track with a financial career. What did he decide to do then? Move to Williamsburg, Virginia and become a painter. It's not as intense as working to set the schedule of the most powerful man on earth, but there are many advantages and it's far preferable to sinking into the Washington has-been scene.

Like jumping out of an airplane, no matter how well you set up your parachute, you're going to hit the ground hard when you leave the White House. It's just too intense a transition for it to be any other way. Still, if you do it right, and you follow the ten *Washington Monthly* commandments, you should be able to land without breaking both legs. ●

Research assistance provided by Elisabeth Frater and Linda Persson.

The Washington Monthly Journalism Award

MARCH 2000

DAVID WILLMAN

"Rezulin's Swift Approval, Slow Removal Raises Issues"

Los Angeles Times: 3/10-3/27

On March 21, the federal government and the manufacturer of the diabetes drug Rezulin announced withdrawal of the product from the United States market. Rezulin has generated almost $2 billion in sales but the drug's toxicity to the liver has injured or killed thousands of patients. The withdrawal was a direct result of the facts brought to light by Willman's articles dating back to December of 1998 (including a Washington Monthly *article urging the FDA to take it off the market in September 1999) that disclosed the health problems associated with the use of Rezulin and documented the government's failure to protect diabetes patients who took the drug.*

KEN DILANIAN, RENA SINGER, AND GLEN JUSTICE

"Public Work, Private Gain: How Pa. legislators straddle the line"

Philadelphia Inquirer: 3/19-3/23

How can Pennsylvania lawmakers use their authority and influence with impunity to benefit their own families and businesses, to win no-bid contracts with state agencies, and to represent private clients before these agencies? By operating under narrowly drafted ethics rules they are able to keep citizens in the dark about these financial interests when sponsoring or opposing legislation. This hard-hitting piece exposes these conflicts in great detail and urges the legislature to file written disclosures about potential conflicts.

ANDREW SCHNEIDER

"Uncivil Action: Asbestos mining leaves a deadly legacy in Libby, MT—and nationwide"

Seattle Post-Intelligencer: 3/2-3/25 (extension of series that began in October, 1999)

Hundreds of miners and members of their families have suffered agonizing deaths or are vainly battling fatal diseases—including lung cancer and mesothelioma—which have been traced to tremolite, an exceedingly toxic asbestos fiber. In an exhaustive and continuing series, the Seattle Post-Intelligencer *investigates the lethal consequences on the town of Libby of a vermiculite mine owned by W.R. Grace & Co and the public health and political implications of the health danger.*

DAVE DAVIS AND ELIZABETH MARCHAK

"A Deadly Difference: America's Racial Health Divide"

The Plain Dealer: 3/12-3/16

In a comprehensive county-by-county look at the alarming racial disparity in health care and death rates, the Plain Dealer *analyzed 10 years of death records and conducted extensive interviews. The report concludes that black people die at higher rates than whites from preventable and treatable diseases and that it is easy for lawmakers to ignore victims who don't vote, can't hire lobbyists and can't afford basic medical services. The story raises the question of whether the gap will ever be closed without universal health care coverage*

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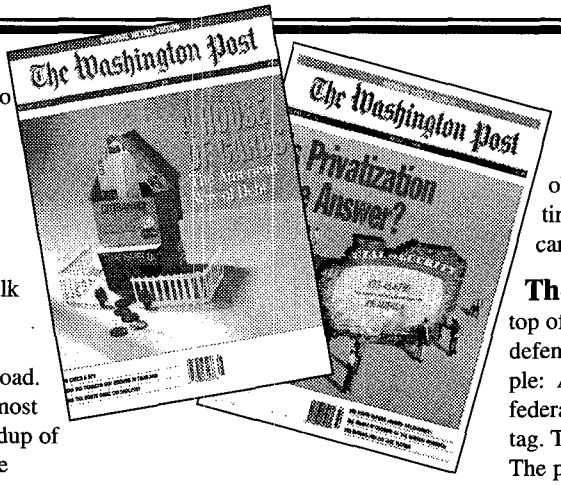

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Drug Rush

Why the prescription drug market is unsafe at high speeds

By Stephen Pomper

THE DRUG WORLD THAT AMERICANS once worried about was a shadowy demi-monde populated by hollow-eyed junkies toting needles, spoons, and Jefferson Airplane LPs. But times have changed, and a new drug culture requires our attention. The pushers in this culture wear lab coats and business suits and move their product through HMOs and family doctors. And although their drugs may be government regulated, that does not make them safe. According to statistics cited by Food and Drug Administration officials, toxic reactions to marketed drugs are estimated to cost more than $30 billion per year and be among the ten leading causes of death in the United States.

You might think that under the circumstances, the government would be pouring enormous resources into evaluating the hows and whys of prescription drug fatalities, but it is not. Industry-supported reforms have provided the FDA major resources to focus on the approval of new drugs, but once these drugs are out in the market, the picture changes dramatically. The group that keeps track of whether these drugs are hurting the people who are taking them is one of the agency's weakest stepchildren. It has limited clout within the FDA. It scrapes by on between $10 and $15 million a year—less than what Eli Lilly was estimated to spend on its 1997 Prozac ad campaign according to *The New York Times*. It relies on voluntary and unreliable reporting by doctors for most of its information. In the words of Carol Scheman, an FDA deputy commissioner in the 1990s, the nation's system for keeping track of the bad effects of prescription drugs is "appallingly bad."

That's particularly lousy news when you consider the speed at which new drugs are being approved and the remarkably aggressive, almost reckless, promotional efforts that go into making them sell. Consider that six new drugs approved since mid-1996 have been pulled off the market, one of the most recent being the diabetes drug Rezulin. Larry Sasich of Public Citizen's Health Research Group points out that all six of them were "me too" drugs: They treated symptoms that were already treatable with existing medications. Nevertheless, millions of prescriptions were written, and more than 150 deaths were linked to these medicines before they were pulled off the market. And because reporting is unreliable, the actual body count could be up to 100 times greater.

Perhaps you're thinking fine, if the system is imperfect, at least doctors are protecting their patients from unsafe new drugs. But drug companies may push doctors to prescribe their drugs even when they're reported to be unsafe. Rezulin is a case in point. In January 1997, the FDA approved Rezulin under its accelerated "fast track" procedures following six months of testing. But it wasn't long before users started dying, the United Kingdom's Medicines Control Agency revoked its approval, and FDA insiders started working with the media—notably David Willman of the *Los Angeles Times*—to get the word out that Rezulin was just not safe.* In March 1999, with the death toll approaching 30, senior FDA epidemiologist David J. Graham publicly told an FDA advisory board that every single patient taking Rezulin was at risk of sudden liver failure. Given all this, and given that there were drugs on the market that treated the same type of diabetes as Rezulin and did not fry a patient's liver, why would a doctor still prescribe Rezulin?

You'd hate to think the answer could be: "Knicks tickets." In a fax that went out to select New York area physicians in spring 1999, Rezulin's manufacturer, Parke-Davis (a Warner Lambert subsidiary) invited guests to attend a "special scientific lecture" at "the Club Bar and Grille ... Madison Square Garden." After a short lecture and Q & A over dinner, the guests would be ushered down to their seats in the stadium where they would watch a "BASKETBALL GAME!!!! New York Knicks

**Willman also reported on Rezulin in the* Monthly. *("Bitter Pill," September 1999).*

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vs. Toronto Raptors." Perhaps you're thinking that it takes a certain amount of chutzpah to throw what is effectively a basketball party for a product that is widely suspected of killing people, but chutzpah is often what good business is all about.

The problem is, it's not always consistent with good medicine.

Maginot Line

As the nation's drug regulator, the Food and Drug Administration should be the first line of defense against drug companies that are pushing dangerous product. But asking the FDA to rein in the pharmaceuticals industry is a bit like sending someone out to catch Niagara Falls in a bucket. The industry has vastly greater resources to press its agenda. And changes in drug laws and regulations have encouraged a boom market for drugs that the agency is not equipped to police.

To get a feel for the mismatch in financial resources, consider the following: The FDA's annual budget for approving, labeling, and monitoring drugs is roughly $290 million. To that figure, add the $2 or $3 million available to Public Citizen's Health Research Group, which was formed to help even the balance between regulators and the drug industry. Now compare those numbers to the $11 billion promotional budget that the drug industry gives itself according to a recent article in the *Journal of the American Medical Association.*

In order to get a full picture of what the FDA is up against, however, you have to step back and see how dramatically the regulatory landscape has changed in the last decade. Back in the early 1990s, there was a widely shared perception that the FDA was too slow to approve new drugs even when they might offer desperately needed help for people who were dying. AIDS activists were particularly eager to light a fire under the approvals process out of concern that the FDA might be holding up life-saving or life-prolonging treatments. They were well connected and highly committed, and they had the support of an industry that wanted faster approvals for its own reasons. It therefore was no great surprise that in 1992 Congress passed a new law creating the blueprint for a faster approvals process. Under the new law, the FDA would hire more reviewers and take the other steps necessary to speed up reviews without sacrificing rigor, and industry would bear the additional costs by paying "user fees" with every new drug application.

But if AIDS helped to crack open the door for faster drug reviews, the pharmaceutical industry was standing right there to kick it wide open. The new law created a faster review process for all drugs—not just breakthrough treatments for diseases like AIDS. This meant that as approval times have dropped from 30 to 12 months on average, there has been a rush of newly approved drugs which do not offer the public any new treatment benefits, but which could pose new risks.

And to compound the impact of the newly-approved drugs, in 1997 the FDA yielded to years of industry pressure and loosened restrictions on consumer advertising. This made it possible for drug companies to advertise on television without spending huge chunks of time describing risks and side effects. Ads for new drugs like Viagra and Claritin became almost as familiar as Burger King commercials. New products generated blockbuster sales in a matter of months.

But while the changes have been a hit commercially, they have created some major problems in the FDA. Probably the biggest is that the changes do no permit the FDA to spend a single dollar of the industry fees it collects to track whether all those new drugs are safe once they hit the market. As a result, the FDA is in approval overdrive, while its safety side is stuck in low gear: The parts of the agency that review and approve new drugs (call them the "review teams") have around 1,300 employees helping process new drug applications. By contrast, the part that tracks whether new drugs are hurting people (call it the "safety team") has 72 employees, including only 13 with formal training in epidemiology—the science of spotting medical disasters.

Former FDA commissioner Donald Kennedy says that the FDA's system for keeping tabs on how and when drugs hurt people is "terrible." "We don't know enough to know when drug problems arise," he says. "And when we know enough, it takes a lot to get them off the market." Part of the problem is that in today's overheating promotional environment, new drugs are likely to generate huge sales more quickly than ever, and therefore may create more damage in a shorter amount of time. Unfortunately, the FDA's safety team relies on tools that were designed at a time when speed wasn't so important. Instead of looking for information, it waits for bad news to come in from doctors (who are not required to report bad drug reactions and therefore only do so sporadically) and drug companies (who are required to report adverse events but get most of their information from doctors). The system is ad hoc at best: Estimates are that only between one and 10 percent of adverse drug events get reported.

Moreover, even when the safety team identifies a problem drug, it has limited authority to act. It evaluates a drug's riskiness and makes a recommendation about what the agency should do. But according to the head of the team, Dr. Peter Honig, it plays a "consulting" role. The review team that approved the drug in the first

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place analyzes its benefits, communicates with the manufacturer, and seems to have the upper hand in helping agency higher ups decide whether or not to withdraw it. Critics rightly argue that the safety team should be given more deference, first, because the review team that approved a drug may not be objective about whether to withdraw it and, second, because the rest of the agency lacks the epidemiological training that is crucial in order to "get" the risk analyses that the safety team produces.

But given that for now the safety team is low man on the FDA totem pole, can the regulators with more clout be relied on to keep the drug companies in line? It's hard to respond with a confident yes. Although the agency's review teams have a whistleblower tradition that dates back to Frances O. Kelsey (the heroine who blocked thalidomide from the U.S. market), a review officer who objected to Rezulin's initial approval was taken off the case and a reviewer-turned-whistleblower during the Rezulin affair became the object of an internal affairs investigation. Drug company reps tend to hover over the agency's approvals process and, according to a recent inhouse newsletter, may resort to tactics from name-calling to going over a reviewer's head if problems arise. And in the wake of the Rezulin matter it has been suggested that management—particularly Commissioner Jane Henney and her drug deputies Janet Woodcock and Murray Lumpkin—may identify too strongly with industry.

Is that fair? Consumer advocates like Larry Sasich of Public Citizen argue that Henney "sold the farm" to get confirmed by a Republican Congress, and that the agency has been "completely coopted by industry." But defenders insist that management's mistakes are more innocent: They reflect the sort of tunnel vision that commonly afflicts bureaucrats who stake out positions and then can't admit to getting them wrong. And former colleagues like ex-Deputy Commissioner Carol Scheman bristle at the suggestion that Henney's team yields to industry pressure. "I don't think it's possible," she says. "These are among the most rigidly moral people I know."

A deliberate sell-out by FDA management is highly unlikely. But it is more probable that there is an unconscious tendency to hear the loudest voice. And in the context where they operate, that voice belongs to the drug industry. After all, the new drug laws have enhanced the industry's role in the drug approval process. And every year FDA management has to seek appropriations from an anti-regulatory Republican Congress with many friends in the drug business. Under the circumstances it's not hard to imagine how a person could find herself listening just a bit harder to the drug companies.

Given that the FDA's safety team is anemic, reviewers feel like they're being hassled, and management is whipsawed between science, politics, and industry, doctors are an increasingly important buffer between potentially dangerous drugs and the public. But if the basketball promotion that Parke-Davis put on for Rezulin is any indication, the drug industry is intent on wearing them down. And Knicks tickets are just the tip of the iceberg.

Tricks of the Trade

Finding a doctor who will confess outright to being influenced by pharmaceutical company promotions is a thankless proposition. But the general absence of Hippocratic self-awareness cannot change the facts. As noted above, the pharmaceutical industry spends $11 or $12 billion a year and a lot of brain power figuring out how to push doctors' buttons. You don't part with that kind of money unless you get some kind of return on your investment. And to put a finer point on it, a study published this January in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* (entitled, appropriately enough, "Is a Gift Ever Just a Gift?") concluded that the various tools in the drug company sales kit do in fact influence doctors' prescription practices and in some cases lead to "non-rational" prescribing.

The basic form of promotion is the sales call. Drug companies spend $5 billion a year sending representatives—called "detailmen"—to doctors' offices. While the companies argue that detailing provides a valuable educational service by keeping physicians up-to-date on the latest changes in medical science, detailing (like any sales call) is more manipulation than education. Sales reps keep FBI-style dossiers on physicians that include info from the names of family members to golf handicaps to clothing preferences. A national service called IMS Health gives them database printouts on exactly what prescriptions the doctor has been writing. And detailmen are under intense competitive pressure to do what it takes to make a sale. *Pharmaceutical Representative*—a trade journal—features columns with sales tips on everything from how to handle a doctor who says that your product caused a terrible allergic reaction ("You might say, 'Wow! There's only a 0.01% chance of that happening'") to tricks for gaining access ("You must find ways to 'get in the physician's face'") to the more banal secrets of throwing a successful sales dinner ("Arrange in advance to cover valet parking and tips").

Which brings us to the subject of bribes—otherwise known as "gifts," "samples," and "entertainment." It's true that drug representatives have toned down their peddling techniques a bit since 1990, when the FDA passed regulations forbidding "gifts of substantial value." But what those regulations really seem to have accomplished has been to shift the

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emphasis from expensive hardware like stereos and fax machines to promotional trinkets and meals and travel. "Doctors are still going to dinners and on cruises and to baseball games," says Dr. Bob Goodman, an internist at Columbia Presbyterian Hospital in New York who also runs "nofreelunch.org," a Web site dedicated to the eradication of medical graft.

Of course you can't just offer a self-respecting professional a bribe. One of the key arts in pharmaceutical salesmanship is to convince the doctor that he somehow deserves what he's getting. Dr. Jerry Avorn, a professor at Harvard Medical School, says that salesmen often couch their dinner invitations in flattering terms like "Come on—you're a busy guy and you've gotta eat anyway; I'll just pick up the tab." And to cover docs who'd rather eat with their families, Dr. John Mohrer says that detailmen in Queens, New York have inaugurated a tradition called "Dash-'n-Dine." It involves going for Chinese takeout and sitting with a detailman and maybe an invited guest while your order is being prepared. "You go in and schmooze with them, they buy you a drink, and they tell the cook to take it slow," says Mohrer. "The last time I was there they'd brought in an endocrinologist from 75 miles away to talk about Rezulin." After a half an hour or so of light, boozy sales patter, the cook produces the order, the detailman produces his wallet, and the doctor walks away with dinner for the whole family.

If the doctor is just a stick in the mud, then making inroads with the staff is another option. Abbey Meyers of New Fairfield, Connecticut recently emerged from an appointment with her arthritis doctor to find a detailwoman stocking the sample cabinet and chatting up the receptionist. "Say, how about I come by next week and take the staff to lunch," asked the detailwoman. What about the doctors? "We'll just bring them back takeout" came the reply. Meyers, who is attuned to these things as president of the National Association for Rare Disorders, notes that the advantages in targeting the rank and file are clear enough: Nurses and physician assistants have doctors' ears and keys to the sample closets that reps like to stock with their wares.

Of course samples aren't quite the freebies that they seem. Although some are used for indigent patients, they're more generally used like baited hooks. The patient who goes home with a pocket full of free medicine from his doctor may feel like he's making out, but he's really forming a debt of gratitude toward his doctor, who in turn feels gratitude toward the drug company. It's easy to see how through all this warm feeling a doctor can become more inclined to prescribe the medicine and the patient can be more inclined to ask for it.

Of course one of the easiest and most common gambits that sales reps use is to stock an office larder with small toys of insubstantial value that have the Manchurian Candidate effect of pricking a doctor's subconscious when it's prescription writing time. These paraphernalia—pens, pads, small toys with the company's logo—are by design too small to provoke suspicion and yet can be deviously effective. "I did a study at North Shore 10 years ago," wrote Dr. B. Robert Meyer in a recent email to the nofreelunch web site. "Drug lunch with pizza by the piperacillin rep. Gave out 'pipramints' to the house staff and some info about their drug ... Our piperacillin use went from $5,000 to $15,000 in the next month."

But Meyer thinks that the doctors are to blame more than the detailmen for the graft element in pharmaceutical sales. He wrote to nofreelunch: "If you talk to the representatives and get them to let down their hair about things, they will tell you horrifying stories of out-right extortion by physicians, as in 'I won't prescribe any more of your product unless you get me good seats to the Yankee game next Saturday. I used to think that these were few and far between, but the more reps I talk to, the more stories I hear.'" Other doctors confirmed that hold-ups of this nature are altogether too common. "Many of us are for sale," concludes Meyer. "And therein lies the problem."

Pull Out All The Stops

To the extent Dr. Meyer is right, Yankee tickets may be the least of it. People both in and outside the pharmaceutical industry told me that if you really want to buy a doctor's loyalty, then you need to get her on the company payroll. "Get them on the payroll and it's *amazing* the prescribing they will do," one pharmaceutical company insider told me. But how do you get them there?

One way is to take a page out of Searle Pharmaceuticals' book. When Searle wanted to promote its new drug Celebrex, it invited 300 doctors and pharmacists to Orlando, Florida for a winter weekend getaway. According to Thomas J. Moore, who wrote about the episode in *Washingtonian* magazine, Searle had used IMS data and other sales rep info to pinpoint these particular individuals as opinion leaders who would be useful spreading the Celebrex gospel in their communities. The purpose of the Orlando weekend was therefore to recruit them to a national "speakers bureau" for the new drug. For their trouble, Searle paid the doctors $500 for coming to Florida and $500 for each speech on Celebrex they gave after becoming

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a member of the team. Plus, the company pulled out all the stops in Orlando.

"It was truly disgusting the money they spent," said one participant to Moore. "Shrimp the size of your finger. Would you like the filet mignon or the salmon? Open bar all the time. It wasn't just scotch—it was Chivas Regal." In addition, Searle was thoughtful enough to rent out Universal Studios theme park for an evening, and far-sighted enough to have attendants standing by with umbrellas when a cloudburst threatened to ruin the fun.

Of course it's hard to say how much the three hundred Orlando conventioneers contributed to the success of Celebrex, but it's worth noting that the drug generated roughly a billion dollars in sales during its first year on the market—the first drug ever to attain that mark in its first year out. And what great breakthrough did Celebrex offer to merit these results? Actually, it's a painkiller—like aspirin, acetaminophen, and ibuprofen, but with a slightly different chemical action. Moore notes one other difference too: In some of the tests performed for FDA approval, Celebrex actually turned out to be less effective than painkillers already on the market.

As a result, the agency is in approval overdrive, while its safety staff is stuck in low gear.

Prescription for Disaster

Some doctors argue that detailing gimmicks and promotional trips are just advertising and can be discounted as such by a discriminating professional. If you buy that (and the studies suggest you shouldn't), then there are still other forms of promotion to be concerned about. One of the most pernicious is industry-funded research and training.

The funding game works like this: In one corner are academics, who need to get published and to get grants. In the other corner are companies, which like studies that make their products look good. And in the background, as Eyal Press and Jennifer Washburn recently described in *The Atlantic Monthly*, is the fact that industry funding for academic research octupled between 1980 and 1997, as research costs climbed, and the rate of growth of federal support declined. So it's not a great surprise that researchers often look to companies for grants, and companies often look to researchers for studies that will make their products look good.

How do they know that these studies will in fact make their products look good? They just do. In the first place it turns out that even when sponsors aren't involved, the great majority of drug studies shed favorable light on the products being examined. In a 1996 study in the Annals of Internal Medicine, Stanford University's Mildred Cho found that on average 79 percent of papers on unsponsored research reflected favorably on the drug in question. While that's a pretty impressive number, it's almost modest compared to Cho's finding that the percentage went up to 98 percent for papers on industry-sponsored research. (This doesn't seem to bother most medical journals, which will publish sponsored research so long as the conflict has been disclosed; the *New England Journal of Medicine* has a rule that it won't publish sponsored research at all, but in February it admitted to breaking it 19 times in the past three years.)

Why are researchers so favorably disposed to the drugs they're peering at? Perhaps they've had friends who learned that coming forward with negative results can land you in a heap of trouble. Indeed, some researchers who have tried to publish unflattering findings have been threatened with lawsuits. In one troubling case from the mid-'90s, a U.K. drug company called Boots threatened legal action against University of California researcher Betty Dong in order to keep her from publishing a study that they had funded on one of their products. The study showed three Boots competitors to have products just as good—which apparently was not the finding the company had been hoping for. Dong eventually got the right to publish, but by that time, Boots had assembled another research team that reached the opposite conclusion and published it elsewhere.

By contrast, if you publish a couple of papers that a drug company likes, they may decide to put you on the symposium circuit. Dr. Michael Gorback recalls that several years ago, when he was on the faculty of Duke Medical School, Smith Kline asked him to do a presentation on an antacid they were marketing called Tagamet. According to Gorback, for the occasion the manufacturer "pulled together a panel of myself, a Harvard med school professor, and a chairman from one of the University of California medical schools."

Gorback says he was flattered by the invitation until one day he went to the mailbox and found that Smith Kline had sent him an entire precooked presentation, complete with lecture script and slides. He says he complained to the company that he had his own ideas but quickly learned he was swimming

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against the tide when the company flew him up to Boston for a pre-meeting that ended up more like a rehearsal. According to Gorback, they were just getting started when the Harvard professor come running in, late and out of breath, and shuffling the script; he announced that he hadn't gone through it yet, but that was O.K.—they should do a read-through to gauge the time.

Gorback was astonished. "This is a guy who trained me," he says. "He has an international reputation. And he was going to put his seal of approval on script without reading it." Moreover, symposium papers often travel further than the symposia where they're read. They may be reprinted in bound "supplements" to medical journals (which have the same livery and typeface as the journals themselves). These supplements can then be passed out by detailmen in the hopes that doc will ignore the small print making clear that this isn't exactly pure science.

When Gorback describes the Tagamet event as "one of the most disgusting experiences of my career" he's talking about the ethics on the dais. But he may have missed other, more earthy, forms of seaminess out in the crowd. In an earlier article in these pages, Alexander Kippen wrote about how a former Texas detailman named Jody Perez who sold for a Johnson & Johnson subsidiary would work a symposium crowd. ("Doctored Results," October 1990) First, he'd suck up to his targets by letting them win phony contests (like guessing the number of pills in a jar). Then, once he got close enough, "I'd find out what their hot button was." It might be booze; easy enough. It might be women; when on familiar turf, Perez kept a list of local nurses, secretaries, and receptionists who liked to entertain visiting doctors. And it might be, surprise, drugs. Some of Perez's customers had a real fondness for codeine-laced Tylenol IV (liquid formula), which Perez called "juice" and which the docs liked to put in their cocktails to give them an extra kick.

Overkill

If codeine won't do it, another way to get to doctors is through their patients. And that's why consumer advertising has become so important. Television advertising has exploded since 1997 when the FDA eased regulations. Drug companies spent $900 million on consumer ads in the first half of 1999 alone. What's wrong with more ads? Primarily the fact that they're so effective.

If a television ad convinces you that you need (or simply want) a drug, there's a good chance you will be able to convince your doctor to prescribe it. A recent study published in *Health Affairs* magazine reported that three-quarters of the respondents saw a drug on TV and asked their doctors for it were successful. In part that's because most doctors won't argue with a patient's prescription preferences unless the medication is going to hurt him. In part it's because they don't have time to argue: In today's HMO-driven world, appointments are so short that a doctor may give you the damn Viagra prescription just so that he can get your cooperation on whatever more important issue is at hand. And it may also be because your doctor sees the ads as a way to drum up business, and wants to encourage you to drop by whenever one captures your fancy.

This can't be a good development. In the first place, the most heavily promoted drugs are often the new ones, which the drug makers are hoping to turn into Celebrex-style blockbusters. These drugs may be FDA-approved—but the FDA only requires clinical testing in populations of about 3,000 people. If this turns out to be a drug that kills one in every 10,000 people, you probably only want to be one of the first 10,000 if you're pretty seriously afflicted and don't see many alternatives. Ten years ago when the FDA was more sluggish with the approvals and drugs tended to go on the market in Europe before here, you might have tried to find out whether 10,000 Germans had survived the experience. But now, 60 percent of new drugs come on the market in the U.S. first, making us the world's guinea pigs. And even if a new drug is safe, there's a more pedestrian consideration: It may not be any better than the invariably cheaper stuff that's been around for ages and gone generic.

In addition to consumer advertising, drug companies get through to consumers by sponsoring "patient groups" that consume whatever drug the company is pushing. For example, it was revealed several years ago that the non-profit group CHADD (Children and Adults with Attention Deficit Disorder), which offers encouraging information on using Ritalin and other psychotropic meds to control hyperactive kids, is partly funded by Ritalin's manufacturer—Novartis. It has also been reported that the Boots company, which manufactures a thyroid product, has at various times provided 60 percent of the funding for the American Thyroid Association. And the list goes on. What's irritating, if not outright dangerous, is that at least some patient groups wind up effectively advertising sponsors' products either by endorsing them directly or by lending credibility to the sometimes fuzzily defined syndromes (e.g., ADD) that the products "treat." Even people in the industry will concede off the record that

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groups acting as advertising agents for manufacturers should be subject to FDA regulation. But they're not.

Fix It

At the root of all of the problems in America's prescription drug culture is the fact that the pharmaceutical companies have seemingly bottomless resources to get their message out and the regulators don't have enough to ride herd. It's time to change that by finding new ways to put out objective information about drugs and rein in the misleading stuff that the drug companies release. But most importantly, we need to pour resources into developing a system that can actually detect bad drugs in the market before they become full-flown public health disasters. A few recommendations:

First, no more gifts or entertainment. It's time to tighten the rules again: If detailmen want to hand out reprints, fine. But there's no reason for them to be picking up meals, leaving pens and mints, and engaging in other forms of small-bore thought control that serve no redeeming medical purpose. And as for samples, these should only be permitted to the extent they're given out to the indigent or uninsured.

Second, increase federal funding for unbiased research. The more resources the government can provide, the more balance there is likely to be in the scientific literature that doctors use to form their medical judgments.

Third, go back to the old rules for TV advertising and regulate patient group promotions. Television drug ads seem to be more capable of harm than good, so let's go back to the old system: Sponsors should have to recite a generous description of a drug's risks if they wish to advertise it on TV. Even if patients tune out this part of the ad, the weightiness of the description is helpful in conveying that this is a potentially dangerous product. This in turn would likely have a chilling effect on drug companies' inclinations to advertise on the small screen. As for patient groups that shill for sponsors—their promotional efforts should be regulated by the FDA as though they were agents for the manufacturer.

Fourth, organize "academic" detailing. Doctors need to get information from people other than salesmen and hired guns like Dr. Gorback and his co-panelists. A few years back, Harvard med school profs Jerry Avorn and Stephen Soumerai came up with a way to achieve this called "academic detailing." The basic idea is that medical schools would send their impartial detailers without any drug company ties to brief doctors on the latest drug advances. They found that doctors were more receptive and willing to spend time with detailers who had no economic interest in the treatments they were describing. How would the system work in real life? Soumerai says that Australia presents one possible model. There, the government organizes and funds detailing of this nature. Our government should do the same.

Finally, and most important, create a drug safety system that can effectively track what all of the drugs rushing on to the marketplace are doing to Americans' health. That the drug companies are allowed to fund a souped up approval process without putting some money into the FDA's safety team is troubling. That this safety team has to monitor the effects of more than 3,000 prescription drugs on 200 million people with a budget of around $15 million a year is just scary. It is an open secret in Congress and within the FDA that these resources are totally inadequate, so it's time to pony up. Congress should amend the user fee legislation to provide that more money goes to building a real safety system. If this means the review teams won't be able to meet their current targets for new drug approvals, they should put non-breakthrough drugs on a slower track: A number of reviewers would surely applaud this outcome. In the event that additional funds are required, Congress should appropriate them.

What would the safety system look like? It would be capable of collecting the information required to figure out how drugs are being used and whether they're causing harm, much as the Centers for Disease Control keep tabs on the spread of diseases. And it should play a much more substantial role in the process by which drugs are removed from the market. It should not be required to take a back seat to the original review team when it comes to deciding whether or not to pull a drug off the market. And some have suggested that it might even be formed outside the agency, in the same way the National Transportation Safety Board exists outside the Federal Aviation Administration, to give it some objective distance from the politics and matters of professional pride that impact decision-making.

Creating such a system, and taking the other four steps recommended above, could go a long way toward compensating for the wretched excesses of America's prescription drug culture. And who knows, they may lessen the chance that your doctor prescribes a drug that shouldn't be on the market for reasons that aren't quite rational—like the fact that the Knicks took the Raptors in overtime. Now, don't you feel better already? ●

Research assistance provided by Igor San-Juan and PatrickEsposito

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Missed Information

The reporting tool that reporters don't use

BY MICHAEL DOYLE

THE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT (FOIA) can be a reporter's best friend. But consider this: The Environmental Protection Agency receives about 22,000 FOIA requests annually. One percent come from the media. Or this: In 1998 the Drug Enforcement Administration received more FOIA requests from prisoners than from reporters. Or this: The National Security Agency has received more requests for information about UFOs than for any topic from reporters. Or, symptomatically, this: The apparent 1998 champion for aggressively filing FOIA requests across multiple federal agencies was not a dogged investigative reporter but a political operative seeking dirt on an opponent.

Certainly, a few reporters do use the Freedom of Information Act—sometimes with spectacular results. Reporter Russell Carollo of the *Dayton Daily News* filed more than 100 FOIA requests for the 1998 Pulitzer Prize-winning series on military medicine he co-authored with Jeff Nesmith. But most reporters never use the law at all. Many FOIA-centered stories in newspapers come, not from reporters' initiative, but from special interests who use the law to dig up information that they then feed to reporters. Moreover, although the whole point of FOIA is to dig up the lid on executive branch operations, the few reporters who do use FOIA often couldn't care less about the executive agency they're demanding information from; they want copies of letters sent from members of Congress to various agencies and aren't really probing bureaucracies so much as seeking evidence of congressional muscle. In one small but illustrative example, the Labor Department's Bureau of Labor Statistics received six FOIA requests from the media in 1998. Three of these sought copies of congressional correspondence. Similarly, Transportation Department headquarters received 22 FOIA requests from reporters in 1998; 13 of these, more than half, sought congressional letters. This FOIA-enabled search for congressional letters, however meritorious, reflects the general tendency among Washington-based reporters to concentrate on Congress and ignore the administrative agencies. More broadly, it highlights just how cramped journalistic FOIA use has become.

Few and Far Between

The law is pretty easy to understand and generally easy to use. In short, the Freedom of Information Act, passed in 1966, establishes a presumption that records in the possession of agencies and departments of the executive branch of the government should be accessible to the people. And usually, to get these records, you don't even need a stamp. Requests for documents from executive agencies—Congress, predictably, excluded itself from the law's reach—can now often be faxed to designated FOIA offices. Professional organizations like the Investigative Reporters and Editors run FOIA workshops, and the Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press's useful Internet site includes an automatic FOIA letter-generator that makes filing a snap (http://www.rcfp.org/). Recalcitrant agencies can also be prodded by lawsuits. Yes, it can sometimes be a hassle; and, yes, the wait can sometimes be interminable. But the rewards can be abundant; moreover, frequent use of FOIA helps keep bureaucracies on their toes, and helps fend off those who contend the law has lost its Fourth Estate rationale.

"My sense is, it's not being used nearly as much as I think it should be," said Alan Miller, an investigative reporter in the Washington bureau of the *Los Angeles Times*. "I think reporters become discouraged, understandably, by the amount of time it takes ... it's unfortunate, and it's a missed opportunity."

We know this is so, in part, thanks to the law itself. Using the Freedom of Information Act, I obtained the so-called FOIA logs from about two dozen federal agencies. These are the records of requests made during 1998. The logs themselves are a hodgepodge that

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highlight how different agencies handle FOIA. The Interior Department and Agriculture Department headquarters logs, for instance, were handscrawled, while the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) headquarters maintained its requests in a handy record-management software package. The federal government may spend $168 million a year coping with 100 million-plus FOIA requests, but a consistent government-wide system has yet to be developed.

Most important, these logs reveal, in varying detail, who's asking for what. They show, for instance, how Alan Miller cast a wide net across various agencies in 1998 with requests for letters from congressional leaders including Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott and Senate Minority Leader Tom Daschle. The logs also show that former Sen. Carol Moseley-Braun (now the Clinton administration's ambassador to New Zealand), Indiana Republican Rep. Dan Burton, and Sen. Mitch McConnell were favorite targets for reporters.

The FOIA logs also reveal, tellingly, that the champion information-seeker wasn't a reporter at all—although her work, properly laundered, might have fed a story or two. With regard to sheer quantity, an opposition researcher from the San Francisco Bay Area named Cara Brown led the pack. Working quietly for the primary campaign of Democrat Al Checchi, Brown filed myriad requests for information on Republican gubernatorial candidate and former southern California congressman Dan Lungren. From the Legal Services Corp., for instance, Brown requested all "letters, memos, telephone log entries, message receipts, notations of conversations, meeting notes, e-mail messages, fax cover sheets, reports, statistics, [and] calendar entries" dealing with Lungren. Nor did Brown limit herself to Lungren's time in public service: Brown wanted Lungren-related files going back to the time he was 18 years old.

"The basic role of the opposition researcher and FOIA is to come up with information that is prejudicial to the object of the search," said Garry South, the senior political adviser to California Gov. Gray Davis. "It can be almost anything, and in a lot of cases, it's a fishing expedition."

South, who identified Brown as one of Checchi's workers, naturally had his own researchers using the same tool. Obnoxious as it may sound, reporters could learn something from these political operatives. Ideally, of course, reporters won't presume that the only worthwhile information will be prejudicial to the target; indeed, FOIA is great at revealing the fascinating nuances of government in action.

Opposition researchers aside, the FOIA logs cumulatively reveal the relative infrequency of media requests. The Drug Enforcement Administration, for instance, received roughly 2,000 FOIA requests in 1998, only 57 of which came from the media. Federal prisoners were far more prolific. Similarly, the Public Health Service received about 520 FOIA requests in 1998. Only 25 came from journalists.

Even worse, take the HHS headquarters. Of the 1,100 FOIA requests it received between Oct. 1, 1997 and Sept. 30, 1998 only about nine percent came from reporters and most of the reporter requests were filed by a handful of journalists or media organizations. Nearly one-fifth of all the media requests to HHS headquarters came from just two trade publications, and, of the requests filed by newspapers, one-third came from the *Los Angeles Times*, *Chicago Tribune* or *Dayton Daily News*. Television reporters filed a grand total of five FOIA requests to the HHS headquarters.

Use It Or Lose It

This all seems a special shame. Journalists, after all, were not just cheerleaders during the long campaign by the late California congressman John Moss to pass the Freedom of Information Act. They were, emphatically, present at the law's creation. "Moss' greatest allies were the press associations," recalled Washington attorney Michael R. Lemov, a former Moss staffer. "Without the press, he never would have gotten that bill."

Moss, who died in December 1997, was a good-government champion with a stubborn streak. He started his FOIA fight in 1955, calling reporters as the first witnesses before his newly formed subcommittee on government information. The beginning stages were certainly bleak. A survey by the journalism society Sigma Delta Chi found that of 3,105 congressional hearings in 1953, 1,357 were closed to the press. Executive branch deliberations were equally closed. Though the Administrative Procedure Act provided for release of government information, exceptions limited release to those persons deemed "properly and directly concerned," and allowed denial of requests simply for "good cause." Neither Republican nor Democratic presidents were sympathetic to Moss' crusade. At one point, representatives of 27 federal agencies testified in opposition to Moss' bill. A blunt and sometimes impolitic man, Moss stuck to his guns for 11 years, and in 1966 Congress finally sent the legislation on for LBJ's reluctant signature.

The Freedom of Information Act, which has been further modified several times since, tightened the exceptions under which information could be kept secret. It allowed, for the first time, people to take agencies to court to compel release of information, and it dropped

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the requirement that information-seekers be "properly and directly concerned" with the matter at hand. Federal officials would no longer be in the business of judging the appropriateness of a requester's motives. At the same time, lawmakers made clear their expectations about who would be primary users of the new law.

The House Republican Policy Committee in May, 1966 cited the media first in a recitation of FOIA's potential users. The law, GOP members said, would aid "reporters as representatives of the public, citizens in pursuit of information vital to their interests, and members of Congress as they seek to carry out their constitutional functions." Things haven't of course worked out as planned, though.

"Since 1975, the press and research and scientific journal authors and others have largely abandoned the use of the FOIA," William Taft, then-general counsel for the Department of Defense, told a Senate committee back in 1981. "They are encouraged to elicit information through informal channels, and have found those channels to be satisfactory without resorting to use of the formal request."

In reality, the Reagan administration only cared about reporters abandoning FOIA because that could be justification for limiting the law's reach. If prisoners use FOIA and reporters don't, the argument went, then maybe it was time to roll back the law. This was one unintended and potentially dangerous political consequence of reporters not using FOIA. Carollo attributed the disuse in part to "a failure of the journalism schools" to properly train young reporters in the FOIA arts.

Tied Up With Red Tape

Part of the reason that journalists so rarely use FOIA is that agencies can take so long in responding that the information often seems stale by the time it arrives.

In the worst agencies, there's deliberate footdragging; and, for good and bad alike, there's a never-ending batch of requests to cope with. The various agencies of the Department of Veterans Affairs, for instance, receive a mind-boggling 210,000 FOIA requests every year—that's more than 800 every workday. The resulting long delays, and the periodic necessity to haul recalcitrant bureaucracies into court, deter some reporters from using the law at all. For every *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, which used a helpful congressman and the threat of legal action last year to pry open embarrassing records from the stonewalling Department of Housing and Urban Development, there are any number of papers or TV stations that figure the story isn't worth the hassle. Commendably aggressive, *The Washington Post* in April 1995 took the Agriculture Department to court to compel release of certain crop subsidy information. By the time a judge ordered the Agriculture Department to cough up the information, in October 1996, the *Post*'s reporter on the beat had gone off to other tasks. The State Department, in particular, is a notorious black hole; it is the only federal agency whose backlog of unprocessed FOIA requests is larger than the number of requests it receives each year. It claims a median FOIA response time of 444 days; actual delays can extend for several presidential administrations.

"Often, agency staff use the ordinary delays to deter requesters or to persuade them into narrowing the scope of the reporter's request," says Michael Ravnitzky of APBnet, the online crime-and-justice news service, and one of the most prolific filers. "Depending upon the agency, a FOIA request can take anywhere from a few days to as much as eight or nine years, or even more."

The lawmakers who wrote FOIA knew delay and resistance would be standard bureaucratic responses to information-seekers. That's why they included the provision permitting lawsuits. In other ways, though, FOIA's authors couldn't foresee the law's future use. They certainly didn't anticipate some persistently hot topics. The National Security Agency, for instance, received about 830 FOIA requests in 1998; 15 percent of these, the biggest single share, dealt with Unidentified Flying Objects. The second biggest topic for FOIA requests to the nation's secretive code-breaking agency dealt with contract information. Except for the business about UFOs, the National Security Agency is pretty typical. Commercial entities, government-wide, have long since become the greatest user of FOIA. Businesses are filing requests daily to find out who holds government credit cards, who won certain contracts, what competitors are up to, and how decisions are being made. Of all requests to the EPA, 89 percent came from attorneys, environmental consultants or private industry.

This is certainly consistent with the law's intent of opening up government; but, at least judging by the legislative debate, this was not explicitly anticipated by FOIA's authors. That's the nature of groundbreaking legislation, though: The real world always surprises, and you never know what might turn up. The same is true, after a fashion, with a Freedom of Information Act request itself. Reporters who use the law regularly know that the more requests they file, the more likely they are to scare up a story that matters. After all, it's hard to catch fish if you don't go fishing.

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Stars In His Eyes

The life and politics of Henry Wallace

By Chalmers M. Roberts

THIS IS A MIGHTY BIG (600 PAGE) FIRST-rate biography, written with fervor but told in the calm of long-ago history (Wallace died nearly 35 years ago) about one of the most intriguing almost-but-not-quite characters in America's twentieth century.

Who was Henry Agard Wallace? Son of a Republican secretary of agriculture, he was an Iowa hybrid corn breeder (who made lots of money from that pursuit) who was tapped, as a Democrat, by Franklin D. Roosevelt to be his first and only agriculture secretary. He was the one who plowed under 10 million acres of growing cotton and slaughtered six million little pigs in a desperate effort to bring farmers out of the depth of the Great Depression. If that were all, we would not have this book. But when FDR decided in 1940 to run for an unprecedented third term, and Vice President John N. "Cactus Jack" Garner would have none of it, the president finally picked Wallace to be his number two.

AMERICAN DREAMER: A Life of Henry A. Wallace
By John C. Culver and John Hyde
Norton, $35.00

I still remember the day he became vice president because I covered that event for the now long-dead *Washington Daily News*. Wallace was late getting to the Capitol, FDR was waiting, the band kept playing. I followed Wallace as he ran up the circular staircase near the Senate wing to reach the inaugural stand on the west front, crying out as he reached the top: "Where is the vice president supposed to go?" Nobody seemed to know, and few cared. Only FDR mattered.

Authors Culver, a former Iowa congressman and senator, and Hyde, a former *Des Moines Register* reporter, embarked on this love-of-their-lives project a dozen years ago. They have combed the archives, included Wallace's nearly 5,000-page oral history, and put the results in order and in perspective to produce a highly readable and sympathetic biography, but without sparing Wallace's many faults. The low point was his disastrous 1948 presidential candidacy, to which I will return—for therein lies my criticism.

In The Cornfields

The tale begins with agriculture. For Wallace, beginning in high school: "corn became his passion, his cause, the medium of his genius. He knew corn as well as he knew people ... " By 1932, when FDR was first nominated, Wallace was well known. Through Rexford Guy Tugwell (who would be his undersecretary) he met the newly nominated candidate at Hyde Park. It was an instant success. Wallace saw FDR as a man "with a fresh, eager, open mind, ready to pitch into the agricultural problem at once ..." At 44, Wallace became the youngest member of the Cabinet.

The Agriculture Department was bedeviled by internal feuds and fights, even a purge, and in 1936 the Supreme Court declared unconstitutional the Agricultural Adjustment Act, the New Deal's first effort to save the farmers. The authors never really explain how the department came to be home to so many young communists, including Alger Hiss, John Abt, and Lee Pressman.

Wallace made good copy for the newspapers as "a ferociously competitive [and ambidextrous] tennis player without a trace of style or grace." He threw boomerangs on the Mall, beaning a photographer. With his family he lived in a Wardman Park Hotel apartment, hiking the three miles to work. And he

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made the cover of *Time* magazine in 1938 with a flattering Grant Wood portrait now on the cover of this book. He was among those mentioned as possible successors to FDR.

There was, however, an aspect of Wallace not generally known. He long had been a mystic. His intellectual curiosity led Wallace to explore "esoteric phenomena" such as seances, symbols, rituals, astrology. By 1933 Wallace's search for "inner light" led him to a guru named Nicholas Konstantinovitch Roerich, a fellow talented at "separating wealthy Americans from their money." He didn't get Wallace's money but the relationship became an albatross, with Wallace's "guru letters," written often at fever pitch, always seemingly on the point of exploding in public. They finally did in 1948.

The key to Wallace's selection in 1940 as FDR's vice presidential candidate was Roosevelt's feeling that Wallace "thinks right" and has "the general ideas we have." So FDR told Labor Secretary Frances Perkins that "I have decided on Wallace" and she passed word to Harry Hopkins, his emissary at the Chicago Convention. The authors of *American Dreamer* explain the choice better than I have seen it done before.

When FDR praised Wallace to his political expert, James A. Farley, Farley said many people considered Wallace a mystic. FDR snapped back: "He's not a mystic. He's a philosopher. He's got ideas. He thinks right. He'll help the people think." So Farley recorded it, and he had a fabulous memory. But the party bosses gathered in convention wanted someone, anyone, other than Wallace and it took the calming words of Eleanor Roosevelt to shame the convention into voting for Wallace. One must remember, looking at this political history that at this moment Europe was aflame in World War II as Hitler vanquished the continental democracies.

The Pittsburgh Post-Gazette threatened to make the guru letters public. But the story never appeared, perhaps because the Democrats let it be known that they knew FDR's opponent, Wendell Willkie, had as his mistress Irita VanDoren, the literary editor of the *New York Herald Tribune*. There is a tape of FDR chuckling at the prospect of its use. As Wallace commented, that campaign "was exceedingly dirty."

As vice president, Wallace inherited a position his predecessor, Jack Garner, has called "not worth a barrel of warm piss." (Generally cleaned up as "warm spit" but I was assured long ago of the true original.) Wallace found time on his hands—and few friends, for this teetotaler offered no drinks in the vice president's office.

After five months FDR named Wallace chairman of the new Economic Defense Board and soon he was "heavily engaged in winning a war" which the U.S. had yet to enter. With Pearl Harbor, all that changed. Wallace early on had been among a group of five that FDR had picked to secretly advise him on atomic policy and the "secret of the bomb colored much of his thinking about postwar planning and security arrangements."

The authors tell us that if there was any one day that represented "the zenith" of Wallace's "influence and authority as a public official" it "would be January 15, 1942." By then Wallace had become "a figure in his own right" both within the war mobilization machinery and as a public advocate for the war effort. But on that day FDR shifted gears, putting Donald Nelson in charge of war production.

Wallace finally realized that he was not the only one with a friendly relationship with FDR and "slowly there would build in Wallace a 'sense of distrust' toward the president." Wallace's battle with the wily Texan, Jesse Jones, and his ally, Texas Rep. Martin Dies, produced charges of communists in Wallace's part of the bureaucracy.

Roosevelt cheerfully agreed that Wallace could speak out about the possible shape of the post-war world. So Wallace kept to the high road with his

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"Century of the Common Man" speech, widely contrasted with Henry Luce's declaration of the "American Century." In short, Wallace became the hero-spokesman of the liberal-left. Too far left, for many, in fact. Churchill resented his anti-colonialism and "Conservative elements of the Catholic Church objected to his revolutionary rhetoric," the authors say.

American communists, lackeys of the Kremlin, liked what Wallace said because he upheld the alliance with the Soviet Union and condemned American criticism of that war-time ally. He confessed, years later, that "I distrusted Britain—Tory Britain—as much as I did Russia." Publicly, Wallace declared that "in case we double-cross Russia," war with the Soviet Union "will be probable ..." To Jesse Jones, Wallace was simply "a crackpot, a misty-eyed dreamer, a messianic do-gooder ..."

All this culminated in the 1944 drive to force him out of the vice-presidency; worries about FDR's health accentuated that urgency for many party leaders. Wallace was no match for the likes of Bob Hannegan, who became the champion of Harry Truman. The story of this switch has long been known. But reading the Culver-Hyde account impresses one about FDR's negligence—or maybe just his Machiavellian instincts—in this crucial switch. The authors flatly state that FDR "joined the conspiracy" to dump Wallace. The authors don't speculate about Wallace as FDR's successor but it would have been traumatic. My guess is that a President Wallace would have been impeached, after the fashion of Andrew Johnson, not Bill Clinton.

So Wallace, now commerce secretary, watched with alarm as Truman followed FDR's first moves into the Cold War era; he felt the Greek-Turkish aid and the Truman doctrine could only lead to war with the Soviet Union. The newly formed American for Democratic Action (ADA) brought most liberal leaders together, but Wallace was not invited. Labor leader Walter Reuther, who knew from experience the nature and practice of American communists, called it "tragic that he is being used by the Communists the way they have used so many other people."

Culver and Hyde declare that "certainly Wallace gave no thought to Communist Party wishes in deciding to run" for president in 1948 on the Progressive ticket. But the "Wallace movement," as columnist Stewart Alsop wrote, was "exposed for what it is: an instrument of Soviet foreign policy ..." All the revelations of the decades since then only add to that conclusion, but Culver and Hyde seem most reluctant to say so, once and for all. A lengthy footnote, for example, on Harry Dexter White, Laurence Dugan and Lauchlin Currie is employed to absolve Wallace of reports that he had thought of White and Dugan as potential Cabinet members.

One true puzzle is the motivation of C.B. "Beanie" Baldwin, Wallace's long-time friend and '48 campaign manager. Baldwin's convictions are truly shown to be far left, but whether he was a C.P. member is not resolved here. Baldwin finally broke with Wallace when North Korea invaded the South: Wallace backed Truman, Baldwin and the rest of the Progressive structure opposed American intervention. As a result, Wallace quit the party.

Wallace, in the amazing '48 election, received only 2.38 percent of the votes nationally, trailing third-place Dixiecrat Strom Thurmond (yes, young people, the same Strom Thurmond). Wallace never returned to Iowa (his home state gave him about one percent of its vote). He showed little of his hurt, bought a farm in New York state where he thrived until age 77, when he was struck down by Lou Gehrig's disease.

The authors conclude with Hubert Humphrey's tribute that "above all he was a good man." Yes, but too naive for a politician and would-be president. ●

Holding the Media Accountable

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Edited by David Pritchard

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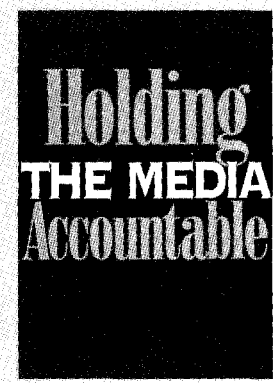

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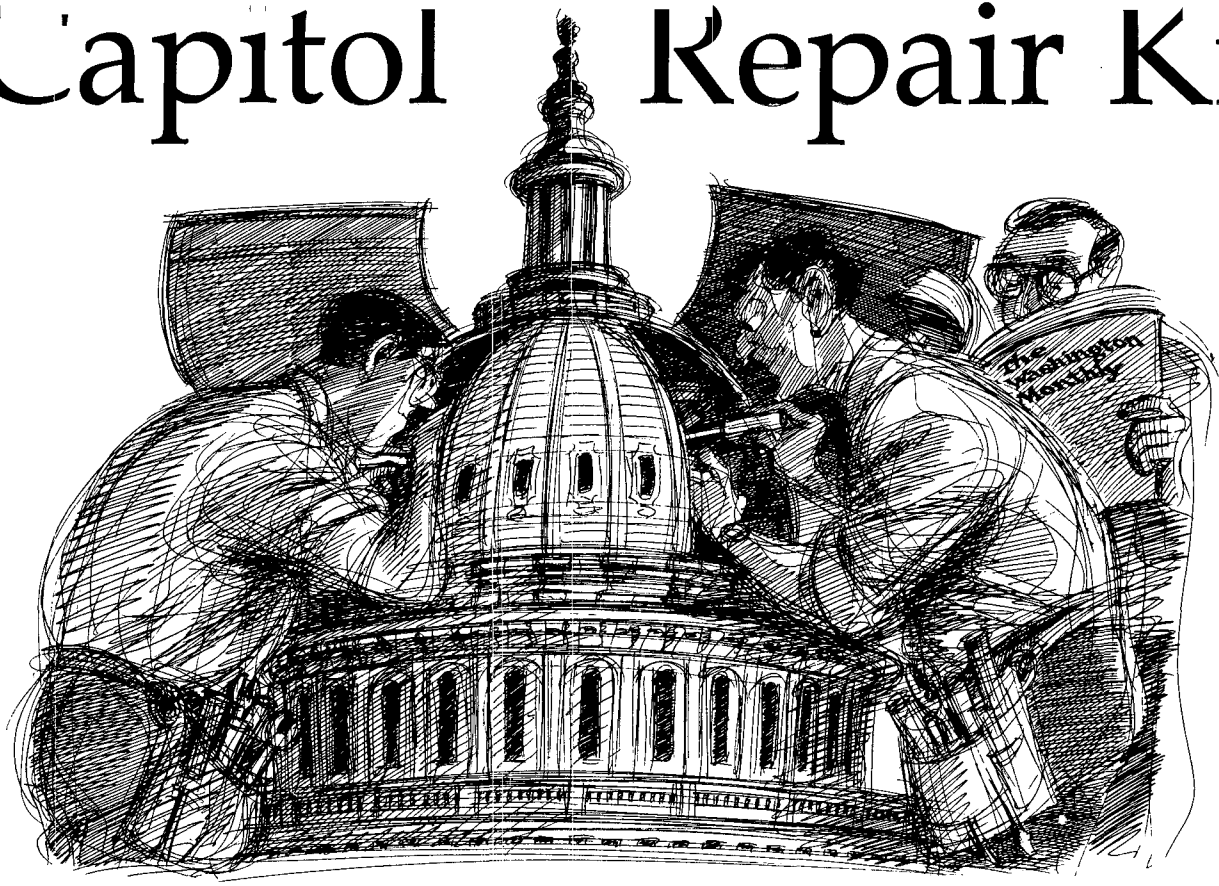

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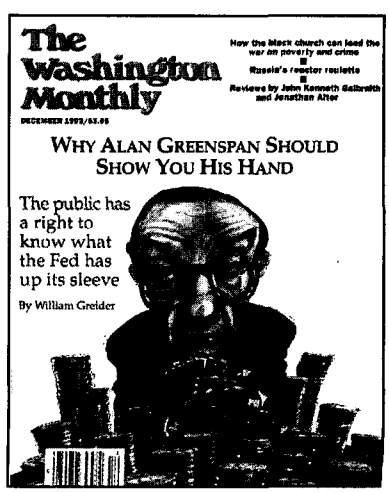

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Political Booknotes

Chicago's Cubs

By Jonathan Alter

I WAS A PEE-WEE BLEACHER bum—11 years old during the summer of 1969 when the Chicago Cubs broke my heart by blowing the pennant to the New York Mets. I grew up seven short blocks from Wrigley Field and on dozens of days each summer my mother would heed my pleas to pack me a brown bag lunch and send me off with my mitt and my friend Billy by ourselves to the ballpark. We'd arrive at about 10:00 a.m., early enough to find front-row bleacher seats for batting practice and the game, then spend the afternoon happily corrupted by the profane and profoundly unemployed beer-swilling fans who later entered baseball lore. "Over the years," Scott Simon writes, "I have heard about as many people claim to have sat in those six rows of bleacher seats right along Waveland Avenue as claimed to have voted for John F. Kennedy."

I was there, Scott, I swear, and you actually get some of the details wrong. There were more than six rows of "bleacher bums" (later the title of a play by Joe Mantagna) and admission was $1, not $1.75. You're thinking of the cost of grandstand seats (See, I'm an expert on this). That extra 75 cents I saved sitting in the bleachers was enough for a cracker jack and a "frosty malt" ice cream. The bleachers also offered a better view of Ernie Banks, Billy Williams, Ferguson Jenkins and my other gods on earth. It took this book to remind me that Ernie once ran for Chicago City Council. Naturally, he lost.

It should be clear by now that although I'm only barely acquainted with the author I have no critical distance from this book. The Cubs' only competition for my affections as a child was one Abraham Lincoln. Scott Simon's step-father, Ralph Newman, a vivid character in this affecting tale of fathers, sons, and sports, was the owner of the legendary Abraham Lincoln bookshop, where my parents began taking me long before I could read. (Newman later was convicted for back dating some of Richard Nixon's papers.) To make matters even more personal, my father informed me recently that the Chicago apartment vacated in the first chapter by the Simon family in 1957 (when Scott was four and I was born) was one flight up from where we lived. Chicago is a very small town.

HOME AND AWAY:
Memoir of a Fan
by Scott Simon
Hyperion, $23.95

I hope it is big enough, literally and metaphorically, to give this fine book the audience it deserves. It is about much more than the Cubs, White Sox, Bears, and Bulls. (The Black Hawks are deleted altogether). Chicago has always rivaled the American south in its production of writers, from Theodore Dreiser and Saul Bellow to Nelson Algren and Mike Royko. Simon, whose storytelling skills are well-known to listeners of National Public Radio's "Weekend Edition," holds his own in this league, at least most of the time. He has near-perfect pitch for the way sports and politics shaped the city from the 1960s to the 1980s; one chapter is entitled: "The Death of the Machine and the Birth of Da Bears." In between, Simon manages to reinvigorate a full roster of unforgettable characters—from Bill Veeck to Dick Butkus to Dennis Rodman, with cameos by Jesse Jackson and Jane Byrne. The portrait of Chicago's first black mayor, Harold Washington, is particularly deft.

It helps that Simon's "Uncle Jack" (the best friend of his father, a comedian who died young) was Jack Brickhouse, the longtime announcer for the Cubs, White Sox, and Bears. While much of the book is mined from clips, Simon knew many of my gods personally. Cleveland Indians fans will also appreciate his salute to Rocky Colavito and his well-honed contempt for Frank Lane, the asinine GM who traded Colavito and anyone else any good (Simon's father was briefly the Indians' field announcer). The difference between this and the hundreds of sports books that appear each year is that Simon actually knows how to write.

In the process, he rescues many great stories from the morgue. One of my favorites is how in the mid-1970s "Papa Bear" Halas, one of the founders of the NFL, wanted to move the Bears to the suburbs. Mayor Daley called him up and said, "I think that's fine, George. You're a businessman. Do what you have to do. By the way, our lawyers say you can't take the name Chicago with you out there. We'd have to take you to court. That could take years. I wonder how many people will come out to see The Arlington Heights Bears? I wonder how excited the network people will be about broadcasting The Arlington Heights Bears? You're a fine businessman, George. You make the call." As other franchises fled, the Bears stayed in Chicago.

Where the plight of the sports fan remains. It is now 92 years since the Cubs won the World Series. The White Sox haven't won the pennant since 1959. Being a Cubs fan, Simon writes, is like rooting for the Italian army or raving about your Edsel. In recent years, with the help of cable TV, Cub fans have spread everywhere and the suffering is almost a character-building cliché. But Simon captures the special toll it has taken on those of us who grew up there. This makes the Chicago triumphs he recounts, from the Super Bowl Bears of William "Refrigerator' Perry in 1986 to Michael Jordan's Bulls dynasty of the 1990s, all the sweeter.

In the summer of 1969, a black cat ran in front of the visitors dugout at Shea Stadium, jinxing Leo Durocher's Cubs for good. Thirty seasons later, I told my eight-year-old son, living in New Jersey, that I would understand if he rooted for the Mets or Yankees. His rebuke was fast and harsh. "Don't be a fair-weather fan, dad," he said. "Sammy wouldn't like it." This fall, when the Cubs win the World Series, I'll give him this book.

JONATHAN ALTER, *a columnist at* Newsweek *and a contributing correspondent to NBC News, is a contributing editor of* The Washington Monthly.

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Chicago's Boss

By Martin F. Nolan

When New York City Mayor Rudolph Giuliani was unable to detect a hint of imperfection among his trigger-happy police this year, he might have learned a lesson, as most mayors could, from Richard Joseph Daley. Facing charges of City Hall corruption in the 1960s, the mayor found solace in scripture. "Look at the Lord's disciples," Daley said. "One denied Him, one doubted Him, one betrayed Him. If Our Lord couldn't have perfection, how are you going to have it in city government?"

AMERICAN PHARAOH: Richard J. Daley: His Battle for Chicago and the Nation
by Adam Cohen and Elizabeth Taylor
Little, Brown & Co., $26.95

Daley was about as humble as Giuliani, but he knew the uses of humility. He knew when to play the religion card, the race card, the party card and anything else in his artfully-shuffled deck. He ruled Chicago from 1955 until his death in 1976, earning the title of *American Pharaoh*, which Adam Cohen and Elizabeth Taylor bestow upon him.

Was he a bold builder? A fine family man? A bigoted bully? A cold, vengeful schemer? A loyal neighborhood guy? A visionary civic leader? A shrewd, cautious county chairman? An impetuous, impatient hack? The authors' answer: Yes.

They are fastidiously fair to the famous mayor and do not take sides. No edge and no attitude adorn this encyclopedic saga of the 50 wards. Like their subject, they take Chicago very seriously. To anyone interested in America or its cities, Chicago is fascinating. Art, commerce, political power, and race are part of the city's story, especially race, the dominant subplot of *American Pharaoh*.

When Martin Luther King Jr. came to Chicago in the 1960s, a theatrical showdown seemed inevitable, but Cohen and Taylor downplay the drama: "To King, Chicago was 'the most segregated city in the North,' but to Daley it was simply a 'city of neighborhoods.' What King viewed as Jim Crow-like segregation, Daley saw as the natural instinct of free people to stick with their own kind." Daley "co-opted" King, the book concludes, without saying whether that was good or bad.

The authors offer multiple choice answers to Daley's obsession with clean streets, particularly downtown. From 1955, their statistics, and his, are impressive: 40 new street sweepers; 10,000 tons of street dirt; and "the first installment of 7,000 new wire garbage baskets." Motivation? Sounding rather like the first page of Charles deGaulle's memoirs, an unnamed "Chicago journalist" suggested that the city was Daley's "'Our Lady of the Lake'. . .and he would never stop building shrines and lighting candles for her." A more secular explanation came from Alderman Joseph Rostenkowski, father of the congressman, who advised the mayor, "Put the money where they can see it." Finally, Cohen and Taylor say that "Improved city service was also good politics in another way: It helped expand the patronage system."

American Pharaoh is fast-paced, comprehensive, and written well enough to evoke the sights and sounds of a great city in turbulent times. But their subject was so notoriously combative that after any tentative judgment, he can be heard asking, as he did of all critics, "What's their program?," or, more lyrically, "What trees do they plant?"

Since Pericles hornswoggled the Athenians in 460 B.C., every mayor has promised to favor the neighborhoods over downtown. Cohen and Taylor fault Daley for favoring "the Loop over Garfield Park." But what was the alternative to Daleyism? They mention two other Great Lakes cities, Cleveland and Buffalo. Had Chicago's economy collapsed, what of the Midwest's or the nation's? A chapter on Daley's vision is "Make No Little Plans," the dictum of Daniel Burnham, the architect and planner whom Daley admired and quoted. Any city whose mayor can cite any architect is a healthy city.

Daley's faults were more obvious than his virtues. The mayor's mother, Lillian, was pleased when he lost a race for Cook County sheriff, thinking it not the job for her son. She was right. "Preserving Disorder," a chapter named for Daley's famously Freudian slip about his cops, documents how little he understood either law or order. The Daley-ordered "police riot" at the Democratic National Convention in 1968 was just what Senator Abraham Ribicoff called it, "Gestapo tactics on the streets in Chicago." As one who saw it and smelled it, I found myself for years savoring Daley's disrepute and that of the Democrats who groveled before him.

But now, with two successful sons, Chicago Mayor Richard and Secretary of Commerce William, the Daley legacy deserves to live long and prosper. Chicago will, I trust, honor his centenary in May of 2002. Reading *American Pharaoh* makes me urgently wish to be there and to raise a glass.

Martin F. Nolan *writes for* The Boston Globe.

Frappacino Generation

By Scott Shuger

Here's a trustworthy sociological generalization: You can't trust sociological generalizations. So you can rest assured that you are not living the resumé-building networky faux-life David Brooks so brilliantly limns in this book. Like hell you can. If you're a boomer or younger, if you went to an Ivy League school (or you wish you did), if your nuptials made *The New York Times*' wedding page (or you wish they did), if you've never been in a Winchell's but can't get your day started without a vente almond frappaccino—boy, has Brooks got your number.

The thesis of this book, no less compelling for its simplicity, is that American culture today—from the low, low end of what kinds of gardening tools we prize to the high, high end of what sorts of books get written at think tanks—is driven by, explained by, and

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limited by the new elite's synthesis of bohemian and bourgeois values (hence the term, bobo). To hear Brooks tell it, in just the past few years, America's best and brightest have stopped trying to fight the centuries-long wars between ideas and money, art and commerce, fairness and merit, freedom and order, and instead have enthusiastically joined both sides.

Brooks is particularly adept at articulating boboism's peculiar incommensurabilities. And in the spirit of Twain, Bierce, and Veblen, his chief tool is mercifully not the statistic nor the chart, but the joke. For instance, he explains the new pecking order thus: "To calculate a person's status, you take his net worth and multiply it by his antimaterialistic attitudes .... Thus, to be treated well in this world, not only do you have to show some income results; you have to perform a series of feints to show how little your worldly success means to you." Hence the value, Brooks explains, of dressing a notch lower than those around you or speaking of your nanny as if she were your close personal friend. Then there is the new mode of conspicuous consumption: "Only vulgarians spend lavish amounts of money on luxuries. Cultivated people restrict their lavish spending to necessities." Such Brooks aphorisms are buttressed by his open-eyed reporting on the places and things that attract bobos. He's done his time in Burlington, Vermont and Wayne, Pennsylvania, at REI and Restoration Hardware.

And indeed he's interested in these places and things, because he is ... well, a bobo. It's Brooks' appreciation of the bobo project that makes this book more than just facile pop slosh. After all, he reminds us, America's new behavioral model is in important ways an *improvement*: more practically sophisticated than the '60s, more spiritual and responsible than the '80s. But as he's keenly aware, both from a personal and national perspective, there is still plenty that's troubling underneath. As an example, take that political variant of boboism, the Third Way: Yes, Clintonism is marked by a political suppleness that gets things done (hidebound conservatives didn't balance the budget, starry-eyed liberals didn't pass meaningful gun control) but in addressing problems by downsizing them, it also promotes complacency about what doesn't get done. And boboism's impact on personal life mirrors this. Once professional life becomes the primary vehicle for self-expression, then non-work is heavily discounted. (Hence, notes Brooks, the peculiar rigor and suffering involved in bobo recreations and vacations.) So for instance, you can never trouble yourself to put any real energy into public, common problems. At one point Brooks acidly wonders why what he calls the "North Face Folks" with their REI ice-axes and crampons don't just go to Minnesota and spend their winter vacation working on a road crew. This is funny because in the hands of the bobos, such useful public work has become unthinkable.

BOBOS IN PARADISE:
The New Upper Class and How They Got There
by David Brooks
Simon & Schuster, $25.00

All this points, says Brooks, to the fundamental bobo angst: Intellectual horsepower may have given the new elites unprecedented levels of freedom but it has not given them peace. In liberating themselves from the traditional constraints of blood, class, corporation, government, and church, bobos also find themselves without those traditional supports. As a result, bobos are engaged in a project that's one part honest striving, one part bad faith: We want ties that don't bind.

Brooks concludes his book by saying the answer is for bobos to mimic the WASP elites of the '40s and take a leadership role in government institutions. But he's short on how they can be induced to do this. And this is the usual way with cultural criticism: Irony is one muscle, social engineering quite another. I have one suggestion—in the spirit of FDR's dollar-a-year men, set up a special service corps open only to top professionals that allows them to work on any government project that interests them. There would only be two requirements: (1) they would have to agree to work on the project full-time for at least one year, and (2) they would have to have a certified net worth of say, $50 million. The point of (1) is to ensure

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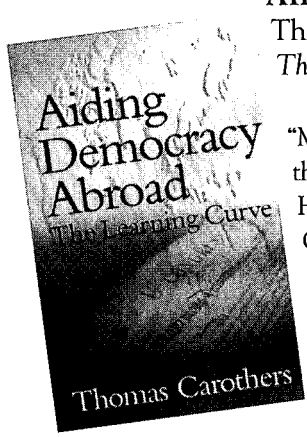

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—New York Times Book Review

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that the resultant government service isn't just resumé puffery, while the point of (2) is to appeal to boboism's cardinal sin/virtue: the desire for objective credentials of accomplishment. The small designer bumper sticker you'd get for joining the Bobo Battalion (the only compensation you'd receive) might just be the missing link between private ambition and public good.

SCOTT SHUGER, *a* Slate *(www.slate.com) senior writer, is a contributing editor of* The Washington Monthly.

The Presidency By Parts

By Allan J. Lichtman

FRED GREENSTEIN, WHO HAS written with great insight and creativity about the American presidency, undertakes in this book his most ambitious project. He seeks to lay bare the heart and mind of presidential leadership through systematic historical analysis. Greenstein's project is of great potential significance. The presidency is the pivot point of American government and there is much to be learned from the historical record of presidential leadership. Greenstein also achieves the remarkable feat of assessing recent presidents impartially, without undue bias or partisanship.

Yet the book fails to realize its promise. Instead, Greenstein falls victim to one of the fallacies common to recent presidential assessments, the deconstruction of presidential leadership as the sum of separate parts. The result is analysis according to arbitrarily selected categories, frozen in time, and fraught with unexamined tensions. In the search for objective standards of judgment, Greenstein misses what is perhaps the most crucial element of "presidential difference," the values that presidents represent and implement during their term.

After a brief introduction to the power and influence of recent presidents, Greenstein presents an analytical model for assessing past and future presidents according to six distinct criteria. These include the president's communication skills, his organizational ability, his political expertise, his capacity to develop a vision for the nation, his cognitive style, and his emotional intelligence. He applies this checklist to the experience of the dozen presidents from Franklin Delano Roosevelt to Bill Clinton. Through this analysis, he suggests the American people should be able to understand the strengths and weaknesses of past presidents and to select future presidents "with attributes that serve well in the Oval Office."

THE PRESIDENTIAL DIFFERENCE:
Leadership Style from Roosevelt to Clinton
by Fred I. Greenstein
Free Press, $25.00

For openers, 12 presidents constitute too small a sample from which to develop or test a typology of presidential leadership. For example, Greenstein's examination of a president's "emotional intelligence" would have been greatly enriched by including Abraham Lincoln, who was subject to mood swings and bouts of depression. Did these qualities undermine his presidency, or enhance his compassionate, insightful brand of leadership? Should a candidate with Lincoln's personal traits be excluded from the presidency because he might fail Greenstein's test of emotional stability?

Greenstein excludes presidents prior to FDR because "until the 1930's, Congress typically took the lead in policymaking and the programs of the federal government were of modest importance for the nation and the world." This distinction is untenable in the light of modern scholarship on the presidency. Despite periods of congressional dominance such as the late nineteenth century, numerous presidents prior to FDR, including Thomas Jefferson, Andrew Jackson, James K. Polk, Abraham Lincoln, Theodore Roosevelt, and Woodrow Wilson dominated their political eras. These and other early presidents imposed policies on the nation that changed the political order in the United States and were of far-reaching significance for the history of the nation. They fought wars on the North American continent and worldwide, founded the American party system, pushed the continental expansion of the United States, facilitated the development of national infrastructure, established America as a world power, set policies regarding Native Americans, dealt with slavery and the Civil War, and initiated federal regulatory and welfare policies.

Greenstein also fails to consider alternatives to his six categories or to explore the internal dynamics of the categories themselves. Why arbitrarily select these particular standards of performance? Why not also include courage under pressure, compassion, tolerance, creativity, etc.? Each category, moreover, presents a dialectic tension that the author ignores. At what point, for example, does vision become ideological rigidity or attention to organizational form become preoccupation with detail?

The very attempt to deconstruct presidents as the sum of separate parts, which has become all too common in evaluations of presidential performance, obscures more than it reveals about presidential leadership. Greenstein's approach calls to mind the perils of judging football players by their vertical leap, foot speed, arm strength, and bench press. By these standards, such stars as Joe Montana and Steve Largent should have been also-rans, whereas countless unknowns should have been top performers.

The fallacy of the categorical approach emerges in several of Greenstein's sketches of recent presidents. For example, Greenstein indicts FDR as "deficient in vision," suggesting that his "views were vague and contradictory and his policies were patchwork." Even assuming that this interpretation is correct (many historians would disagree) a pragmatic, flexible approach to policymaking may have been precisely what the nation needed during the era of the Great Depression and World War II. FDR's predecessor, Herbert Hoover, had a clear and consistent vision for the country. Yet Hoover's vision was a fatal impediment to the adoption of policies responsive to the national crisis. Also clear and consistent was the vision of the isolationists who bitterly opposed America's involvement in World War II. Would FDR have been a better

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president if he had Herbert Hoover's vision of domestic policy or Charles Lindbergh's vision of foreign policy?

In another sketch, Greenstein knocks Clinton for his lack of "emotional intelligence," arguing that Clinton's presidency is a "reminder that in the absence of emotional soundness, the American presidency is a problematic instrument of democratic governance." In contrast, he gives John F. Kennedy a passing grade on emotional soundness, claiming Kennedy channeled his passions and managed to "prevent them from confounding his official responsibilities." Yet Greenstein fails to show that Kennedy was any less reckless than Clinton in exercising his passions. Instead the main difference appears to be one of historical contingency—that Clinton got caught and that Kennedy did not.

The presidency of Richard Nixon also cannot be contained within the pop psychological box of emotional intelligence. Nixon's problem was not, as Greenstein writes, that he "had imperfect control of his emotions." To the contrary, as continuing revelations of far-reaching transgressions demonstrate, Nixon coldly and systematically undermined his public trust for personal and political ends by disregarding the law, ethical standards, and the rights and privacy of his fellow Americans.

Greenstein's historical analysis underscores the futility of analyzing presidential leadership without explicit consideration of the values advanced and implemented by presidents. An assessment of FDR's domestic vision depends on how the analyst views the role of government in American life. An evaluation of Truman's decisions during the Korean War turns upon assessments of the Communist peril and the appropriate means of response. The lesson is that presidential performance cannot be judged by considering form in isolation from content.

Although Greenstein's historical sketches are often balanced and informative, there are numerous assertions of questionable historical validity. For example, he indicts Lyndon Johnson's War on Poverty for "massive expenditures" that failed to break "the

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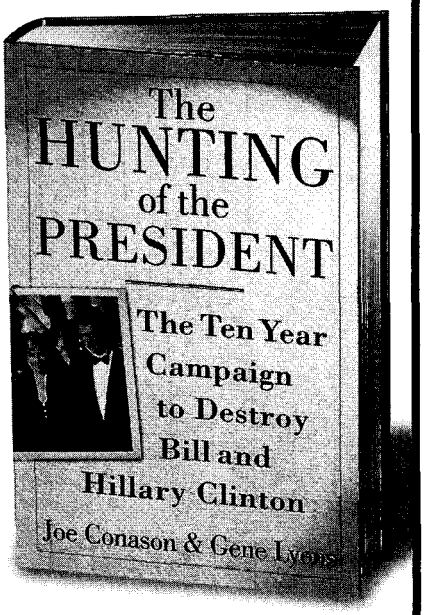
Powerful financiers
Unsavory investigators
Religious extremists
Bitter politicians
Disgraced racists

Together, they nearly brought down a President

"Multitudes of historians will write multitudes of books – but a hundred years from now **the primary source on the so-called Clinton scandals** will still be ***The Hunting of the President*** by Joe Conason and Gene Lyons." — **James Carville**

"After reading *The Hunting of the President,* it is no longer possible to believe that... Ken Starr was even remotely impartial, or that the Jones suit was anything more than a vehicle for the public humiliation of the President." — *The New York Observer*

"*The Hunting of the President* ...reads like one of Balzac's excruciating histories of the secret machinations that lead to the ruin of an innocent. That [Conason and Lyons] write without the self-importance that has become one of the hallmarks of American journalism only adds to the book's immense authority and appeal." — Janet Malcolm, author of *The Crime of Sheila McGough*



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poverty cycle." Yet the War on Poverty was a modestly funded effort designed to help the poor pull themselves out of poverty. The massive social spending of the post-Johnson years came mainly from spending on social security and federal health-care programs. Similarly, Greenstein argues that the Iran-Contra scandal "erupted at the lower levels of the White House," attributing this "misadventure" to aides who exploited Reagan's organizational deficiencies. Contradicting this conclusion is the well-documented finding of Independent Counsel Lawrence Walsh that Iran-Contra was not an organizational lapse, but a set of deliberate policy decisions that "were fully reviewed and developed at the highest levels of the Reagan Administration."

Despite his good intentions, Greenstein does not advance the quest for a Philosopher's Stone for decoding presidential performance. But the failure is a significant one because it illustrates the limitations of attempts to deconstruct the conduct of the presidency into separate parts. The American presidency cannot be understood in terms of rigid, ahistorical categories without consideration of the values that each president brings to the Oval Office.

ALLAN J. LICHTMAN *is chair of and professor in the Department of History in the College of Arts and Sciences at American University.*

Down In Africa

By Joshua Hammer

THERE WAS PROBABLY NO more harrowing assignment for a foreign correspondent in recent years than sub-Saharan Africa during the early 1990s. The abrupt end of the Cold War, mounting pressures for democratization, and the rise of Islamic fundamentalism all unleashed destabilizing forces that resulted in an era of unprecedented carnage. Yet unlike the recent wars in Kosovo and the Persian Gulf, access to the battlegrounds was largely unhampered. For anyone with the stamina and the courage to get around, that posting was a reporter's dream—and nightmare.

Scott Peterson is just such a journalist. As the Nairobi-based correspondent for Britain's *Daily Telegraph* and a photographer for the Gamma Liaison agency, he covered the fall of the dictator Mohamed Siad Barre and Somalia's subsequent disintegration into anarchy and famine. He witnessed the intervention to feed the starving and the disastrous pursuit of the warlord Mohamed Farah Aidid. In between, he somehow found the time to make frequent forays to Sudan, where a little-noticed conflict between the Islamic government and Christian and animist southern tribes has resulted in two million deaths in two decades. Along the way, he was attacked by machete-wielding mob in Mogadishu, shot at by the rebel army in Kigali, shelled by Sudanese forces and nearly done in by a bout of cerebral malaria contracted in the Rwandan bush.

ME AGAINST MY BROTHER: At War in Somalia, Sudan and Rwanda
by Scott Peterson
Routledge, $26

Now Peterson has produced an extraordinary book about his years on the front lines. *Me Against My Brother: At War in Somalia, Sudan and Rwanda* is Peterson's very personal account of that catastrophic era on the African continent. Vividly written and deeply researched, filled with compassion and moral indignation, the book takes its place alongside Keith Richburg's *Out of America*, Philip Gourevitch's *We Wish To Inform You that Tomorrow We Will Be Killed With Our Families* and Mark Bowden's *Black Hawk Down* as one of the indispensable works about that time.

Peterson's account of the Somali debacle is probably the most detailed study of the country's disintegration at the hands of its feuding warlords and of the well-meaning but hapless United Nations peacekeeping operation that followed. He begins his tale with the final days of Siad Barre, whose bloody dictatorship set the stage for the country's collapse into rival clan-based fiefdoms. Mogadishu, the capital, became the lawless domain of teenage militiamen stoked on 'qat,' who raced around the ruined city in souped-up stolen vehicles known as "technicals," armed with an awesome array of weaponry. Into this vacuum stepped Aidid, a brutal killer who was nevertheless arguably the only man strong enough to unite Somalia. Peterson traces the series of missteps that turned a U.S.-led humanitarian mission into a bloody urban war against him.

It is hard to argue with Peterson's central thesis that the arrogance and bungling of top U.S. military and political officials—notably Jonathan Howe, the supremely naive ex-Admiral who became obsessed with arresting Aidid, even spreading Wild West-style "Wanted" posters throughout Mogadishu—led America headlong into a quagmire. His reporting breaks some new ground, including a fascinating account of the spy vs. spy gamesmanship between the American military and Aidid's Habr Gidir clansmen during the warlord's months as a fugitive. Still, some of Peterson's conclusions are debatable. The author faults U.S. special envoy Robert Oakley, for example, for cozying up to Somali faction leaders during the American humanitarian intervention in December 1992, rather than pushing immediately for disarmament. But such a policy would almost assuredly have provoked Aidid and other warlords, and it is highly dubious that President Bush would ever have authorized such a risky mission.

Like many other western correspondents, including this writer, Peterson was mesmerized by Somalia's stark beauty and hallucinogenic violence- yet he steers clear of the macho tone that defines so much writing about the country. His tone is measured, compassionate, and evocative, whether describing the air of paranoia at the fortress like U.N. headquarters or the smell of the capital: "a mix of hot sea and salted, rotting ocean waste and the decomposing refuse of sweating human beings."

The United Nations' humiliating failure in Somalia, of course, set the stage for what was undoubtedly the organization's low point; its abject

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abandonment of Rwanda. Peterson's descriptions of those 100 days of bloodshed will be familiar to readers of Gourevitch's award-winning book. Peterson's prose is less elegant, but his account of the genocide possesses a greater sense of immediacy. For Peterson was present nearly every step of the way: flying into Kigali on a U.N. plane days after the massacres began on April 6, touring the ravaged countryside with the Rwandan Patriotic Front, talking his way through roadblocks manned by drunken Hutu militiamen, and following the French army as it launched a last-ditch military operation—dressed up as a humanitarian crusade—to save the Hutu regime. The author presents little new analysis here, but his descriptions are unforgettable. In one highly effective set piece, Peterson wanders through President Juvenal Habyarimana's abandoned palace, using the detritus he finds in the inner sanctum of the dead dictator to launch into an exploration of the three pillars of the genocide—the Catholic Church, the French government, and the regime's proponents of "Hutu Power."

Me Against My Brother is a depressing book. Squeamish readers may have trouble with the relentless descriptions of rotting corpses, the smell of death, and numerous scenes of violence. Yet nothing feels gratuitous. Still one longs for more analysis and perspective, for a deeper inquiry into the reasons that states such as Rwanda, Somalia, and Sudan collapse. Are there threads that tie these places together, or does each stand alone as a unique example of societal failure? Are such physically and psychologically devastated nations capable of renewal, or are they condemned to a relentless cycle of violence? Peterson leaves such questions largely unanswered. He ends the book with a tiny scene of hope—a mother and daughter, Tutsi survivors, at play among the ashes of Rwanda. But coming at the tail end of a long litany of woe, one senses that Peterson finds that moment hollow.

JOSHUA HAMMER *is* Newsweek's *Berlin Bureau Chief and the author of* Chosen By God: A Brother's Journey.

How To Grow

By Kenneth Arrow

THE QUALITY OF THIS POSTHUMOUS volume only makes those of us who respect and are indebted to the late Mancur Olson regret his untimely death even more.

POWER AND PROSPERITY:
Outgrowing Communist and Capitalist Dictatorships
by Mancur Olson
Basic Books, $28.00

Power and Prosperity is the last in Olson's series of works analyzing the effects of government and social interactions on economic growth. His method has been the construction of relatively simple models of rational choice based on selfish motives to explain the course of economic growth. Even relatively elementary reasoning can give raise to surprising results. Olson does not consider that free markets are the entire solution to the problems of growth, though of course their vitality is a necessary condition. Collective action is also needed, though in his earliest work, Olson argued that collective action is unlikely to occur if there are many participants in the economy; each individual will have an incentive not to participate but to benefit from the collective actions of others (what economists call the "free-rider" problem). For example, if fires are handled by a volunteer fire department, it will pay any specific individual not to volunteer. Only if there are relatively few participants (or few organized groups of participants) will it be easy to recognize the gains from collective action.

This issue leads to a broader view. Suppose a nation is controlled by some autocrat acting entirely in his or her own interest. The autocrat may still have an interest in increasing the growth of the country, instead of simply stealing everyone's wealth, because over a period of time the autocrat will have more income to tax. Olson very neatly works out the implications of this remark. In particular, he shows that there will be an optimal tax by the autocrat which balances his or her desire for immediate consumption against future better prospects. The assumption is that the lower the tax the higher the rate of growth, since growth is fueled by private incentives. Of course, as Olson emphasizes, a good deal depends on the time horizon of the autocrat and thus the prospects of growth are greatest when the autocrat has a long horizon, as in the case of a royal dynasty.

In a democracy, the majority will generally have a stronger focus on overall growth than in particular interests, though this can be offset if some particular interests can express themselves more easily. In his classic *The Rise and Decline of Nations* Olson argues that democracies tend to decline in efficiency over time because special interests have more time to organize themselves.

Olson's latest (unfortunately, last) book concentrates on the disappointing transition of the formerly communist countries which were parts of the Soviet Union or satellites in Eastern Europe. Given the gross inefficiencies of the communist system, one would have expected the transition to a privatized market economy to yield a large increase in output. In fact, the Russian Federation, Belarus, and Ukraine, which together include the great bulk of the population of the former Soviet Union, have national incomes equal to about half of what they were before the fall of the communist system. Even the more successful Eastern European states, such as Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary, are only marginally better

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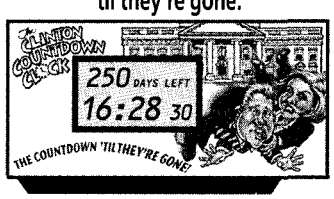

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off than they were. The contrast with the recovery of the former fascist countries, such as (West) Germany and Italy after World War II, when there was also a great deal of war destruction, is very striking. Olson attributes the rapid postwar growth of the last two states to the fact that markets of all kinds could operate freely and reliably and that the institutions representing old special interests had been destroyed by the defeat.

Olson's argument for the failure of growth of the ex-communist countries has several strands. On the one hand, direct state ownership and control meant a more efficient extraction of income by the dictatorship. But this implies the non-existence of the kinds of markets that are needed for growth. Olson several times pointed out that markets involving time and uncertainty are especially important for growth, e.g., a commitment that the proceeds of an investment in fixed capital would remain in the hands of the investor. Since investment under communism was undertaken by the state, these markets did not exist. Further, special interests had had a considerable time to organize, and they remained powerful after liberalization began. As a result, the large industries in Russia are run on subsidies from the government and non-payment of bills, so that efficiency pressures are weak.

Olson argues that the different experience of China can be explained by the Cultural Revolution, which had the effect of destroying vested interests. Hence, once privatization was allowed, a more genuine market system, including markets for capital, could emerge.

There is far more to Olson's analysis than I have given here. He emphasizes the role of force and its disruptive power in preventing efficient use of resources. His stress is everywhere on the importance of good government, by which is meant freedom of property (within ascertainable and impartial limits) and the rule of law in the enforcement of contracts. He regards democracy as one of the guarantees of good government and, at the same time, an insurance that general interests will usually (but not always) prevail. Though the reasoning is strict, it is easy to follow, and the two hundred pages of this volume will make an attractive read.

One can ask whether the simple models that Olson prefers are sufficient to explain the complexity of human governments. As Olson argues, a richer description does not really provide an explanation and I found Olson's explanations for the most part very illuminating. While historical and cultural analyses provide additional background, they do not necessarily serve as useful ways of understanding and prediction.

But I am not entirely convinced by all his arguments. In particular, his explanation why democracy has sometimes emerged is not particularly compelling; it is that the overthrow of an autocracy may require a number of factions or leaders, none of whom wants to be subordinated to others. But time after time, and especially with regard to the transition economies, his arguments shed new light on a complex subject.

KENNETH ARROW *is a Nobel Laureate in Economics and a professor emeritus at Stanford University.*

Spies With Poems

By Robert de Neufville

THE CULTURAL COLD WAR: The CIA and the World of Arts and Letters
by Frances Stonor Saunders
The New Press, $29.95

ALTHOUGH HIS HARTFORD neighbors never knew it, my grandfather Lawrence de Neufville worked for the better part of two decades as a spy. Among other things, he helped oversee a vast cultural propaganda campaign in Western Europe for the CIA. When Frances Stonor Saunders contacted him for this fascinating new book, he was amused to think his cover would finally be blown, more than 40 years after he left the Agency. "I guess the old boys here in town will get a bit of a surprise," he said.

The linchpin of this effort, from 1950 until its link to the CIA was exposed in 1967, was the Congress for Cultural Freedom. Through the Congress and parallel organizations, the CIA secretly underwrote international conferences, art expositions, music festivals, and more than 20 magazines, including the highly respected *Encounter*, which was edited originally by Stephen Spender and Irving Kristol. The CIA campaign was so extensive that, at its height, it would not be wrong to say that the agency acted as a secret ministry of culture. Nearly every prominent Western intellectual in the early years of the Cold War was, wittingly or unwittingly, involved with some CIA-backed program. Among those most notably implicated were historian Arthur Schlesinger Jr., French social theorist Raymond Aron, novelist and essayist Arthur Koestler, and philosopher Bertrand Russell. According to a U.S. government oversight committee, by the mid-'60s almost half the grants given out by various philanthropies—including some by the Ford and Rockefeller foundations—involved some CIA money.

The campaign was designed to bolster Western Europe against the ideological encroachment of Soviet Communism. Specifically, and in an apparent irony, the CIA wanted to highlight the way the American system protected the right of the individual "to hold and express opinions ... different from those of his rulers." CIA planners had realized that the key battle of the Cold War—and indeed the battle whose loss ultimately spelled the end of Soviet power in 1991—was not merely for physical control of Europe but for the hearts and minds of Europeans.

Saunders glosses over the hard question of whether or not it made practical sense or was ethically right to secretly finance intellectual and cultural activity. Instead, she is content to assume that the CIA campaign was sinister and antidemocratic, compromising the very values it championed. This is the easy answer, especially in light of the more serious perversions of the Cold War. But it's one that sits somewhat uneasily with the complex story she tells.

It is clear from Saunders' history, for example, that one of the real, unstated goals of the program was simply to support cultural activity in general, both

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Tidbits & Outrages

He's changing it to Audrey Hepburn and will try again

An Elvis Presley impersonator who legally changed his name to that of the late musician, moved to a small town in Wisconsin and ran for mayor. He lost.

People for the Ethical Treatment of Barley are furious

People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals recently organized an anti-milk campaign to college students, urging them to drink beer instead.

They were on their way to work

According to Capitol Hill Blue, *in the 1998 Congressional session, 84 Representatives and Senators were stopped for drunk driving and released after they claimed Congressional immunity.*

It also referred to Attorney General Jay Leno

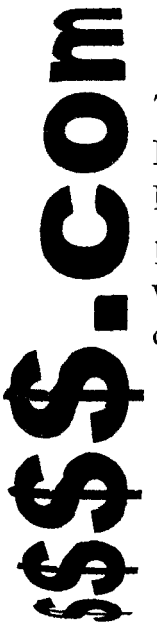
A recent Bush campaign press release quoted "Al Gore's Secretary of Education, Dr. Bill Riley." The Secretary of Education is Richard Riley. He is not a doctor and he works in the Clinton, not the Gore, administration.

They're spending the rest on a weekend in Vegas

Los Angeles Mayor Richard Riordan has announced that the city expects to use almost half of its share in the national tobacco settlement to pay $125 million in damages for falsifying evidence in a criminal prosecution.

Way Off Broadway

The CIA has recently advertised for "Theatrical Special Effects-Wardrobe/Production Design" part-timers to design and construct "clothing and accessories for use in creating necessary special effects."



If they go bankrupt the price will double

The $23 million Internet company NetJ.com saw its share price double in recent weeks, to nearly $4, despite the fact that the company disclosed in Securities and Exchange Commission documents that it has had no profits, no revenues, and does no business of any kind.

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for aesthetic reasons and out of the belief that it was the most compelling evidence of American freedom. This faith in culture had something to do with the fact that the CIA had grown out of Allied intelligence during World War II, which had offered a way for the best-educated recruits to contribute to the war effort while largely avoiding the front lines. The first American spies of the Cold War were thus drawn from the brightest minds of their generation, the so-called "cultural elite." In fact, a surprising number of the first spies were also accomplished poets and scholars. These included a number recruited after the war by John Crowe Ransom, the founder of the prestigious *Kenyon Review*.

It should not be surprising, then, that *Encounter* was, among other things, a cultural magazine of the first rank, which ran stories and essays by the likes of Jorge Luis Borges, Vladimir Nabokov, W.H. Auden, Arnold Toynbee, and Isaiah Berlin. The CIA likewise financed an enormous number of excellent books that might not otherwise have been published, and even, in one particularly bizarre episode, airdropped translations of T.S. Eliot's *Four Quartets* into Russia. Perhaps most strikingly, the CIA took an early interest in Jackson Pollock and abstract expressionism, realizing before most art critics that its vibrant creativity put the repressed painting of socialist realism to shame.

There is moreover no evidence that the program was used to influence the U.S. political process or to push the particular agenda of those in power. On the contrary, the program was primarily aimed at swaying members of the non-communist left—swing voters in the contest for European minds. CIA money thus went to back intellectuals and artists who were considerably to the left of even the Kennedy administration—a fact that at one time put the program in danger of being scuttled by McCarthyism.

Nor does the program seem to have much compromised anyone's intellectual freedom, in spite of Saunders' insistence to the contrary. No one was asked to write or sign on to anything they did not believe. Where the CIA did exert its influence it amounted to an unspoken editorial slant more than censorship. Most of those who benefited from the program were not even conscious of having taken CIA money, much less being under any political pressure. When the operation was blown in 1967, the *Partisan Review* was able to publish an open letter condemning the magazines that had been subsidized as suspect, which was ironic (or perhaps hypocritical) considering that CIA support had kept the *Review* itself afloat several times when it was on the verge of bankruptcy.

The fact is that the CIA campaign was designed to subsidize ideas, not suppress them. If the program had been run openly it would have raised few eyebrows, but it also would have been much less effective. The architects of the campaign were thus motivated by the elitist, but not wholly unreasonable, fear that the American system might not win on its merits alone. If we are inclined to judge the program harshly now, it is because, as the Cold War wore on, it became clear that the real threat to democracy was not Soviet subversion but our own government's lack of accountability. Still, putting on a Jackson Pollock exhibition seems a harmless enough thing.

ROBERT DE NEUFVILLE *is a graduate student at the University of California, Berkeley.*

Lame Propositions

By William Speed Weed

IT'S SPRING OF AN EVEN-numbered year in California and the initiatives are blooming. In March, we chose to send more children to jail, to send more adults to jail, to allow American Indians to build Vegas-style casinos, and to reiterate that gay marriage is not legal in our state. Already, the signature gatherers are out qualifying initiatives for November.

Voters in California and the 23 other initiative states love this power-to-the-people tool that lets us exercise popular democracy and govern ourselves. We're hooked on the self-empowerment of walking into a booth to vote on public policy.

But as David Broder's new book *Democracy Derailed* reminds us, initiative voters are not the legislators-for-a-day they think they are—they do not decide what gets voted on, they do not research the reaches of the legislation, they cannot amend it, they cannot compromise on it, and they will not be held responsible for it. The initiative process is a breezy simulacrum of democracy that, along with its crew of voters, has been coopted by the moneyed few. According to Broder: "The experience with the initiative process at the state level in the last two decades is that wealthy individuals and special interests—the targets of the Populists and Progressives who brought us the initiative a century ago—have learned all too well how to subvert the process to their own purposes."

Broder has written a remarkable book. Almost every sentence in *Democracy Derailed* is a reported fact, crafted into a narrative that—if it occasionally reads like a very long *Washington Post* piece—is thoroughly convincing. For all their potential failings, allowing elected representatives to govern us is the only way for a democracy to work.

Initiatives were introduced in Oregon and California at the turn of the century as a way of bypassing legislatures overrun by corruption. But, as the state houses began to get cleaned up, initiatives fell out of favor—until 1978 when California's Proposition 13 swung them back into use. Spearheaded by anti-tax conservatives who tapped into a growing public distrust of how politicians were spending money, Prop 13 rewrote the state's property tax laws. Instead of assessing the worth of a property every year and charging the owner a tax based on that updated assessment, California tax law now reassesses property value only when a property is sold. The measure had great appeal—homeowners got to lock in their property tax rate. But, Broder notes, as with so many matters of governance, the measure had huge consequences that average voters failed to foresee. The state's budget bottomed out because of lost tax revenue. Education spending was severely cut back, and the once top-in-the-nation school system started a painful decline. The major beneficiaries of this loss of revenue to schools were corporations, which hold property longer than most homeowners.

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At the time, though, the unintended consequences were not as apparent as the simple truth that the people had told the government what to do. Before long, initiatives were popping up again and the power-to-the-people tool was removed from its drawer and sharpened.

Unfortunately, it cuts most harshly into representative government. Originally meant as it was to bypass corrupt legislatures, it weakens the power of elected state government. Broder writes: "Admittedly, representative democracy has acquired a dubious reputation today. But as citizens, the remedy to ineffective representation is in our hands each Election Day. And whatever its flaws, this Republic has consistently provided a government of laws. To discard it for a system that promises laws without government would be a tragic mistake."

DEMOCRACY DERAILED:
The Initiative Movement and the Power of Money
by David Broder
Harcourt, Inc., $23.00

While Broder uses more than a dozen examples to expose the perils of the initiative process, the bulk of this book analyzes California's Prop 226, which was defeated in June, 1998. Prop 226 was a "paycheck protection" measure that would have required unions to get annual permission from members to use their dues for political purposes. The measure had no analogous provision for corporations and their stockholders.

Like most initiatives, 226 was an issue of vital importance to a small number of people and of little or no interest to the general public. The pro-226 forces wanted to weaken unions, which give overwhelmingly to Democrats, in order to bolster Republican candidates. Labor's opposition to 226 was ferocious—its political life was at stake. Broder quotes Harold Meyerson from the *LA Weekly*: "Proposition 226 neither arose from nor was rooted in a public clamor to do something about a social problem. To the contrary, it arose from a very select clamor ... nothing more than a strategic conceit."

But the initiative process allows select clamors to guide public issues as long as they're backed by a lot of money. Regardless of how little Californians might have cared about paycheck protection, upwards of $6 million was spent on 226 by the time both sides were done, and once it was on the ballot it was either going to pass or not.

One initiative-campaign consultant told Broder that when someone comes to him with an idea for the ballot, his first question is, "Do you have a million dollars?" State law requires hundreds of thousands of signatures to put a measure on the ballot and signature gathering, Broder reports, has become big business. There's no such thing as volunteers any more. Ballots are now qualified by professional groups that use networks of regional coordinators and paid signature gatherers. The signature gatherers in the field may or may not care about the particular initiative at hand—they care because they are paid anywhere from 25 cents to a dollar per signed name.

Once an initiative is on the ballot, the process veers even further from the ideals of democracy. Once the text of 226 was written, supporters threw in a clause about foreign contributions to sweeten the deal and employed all-out efforts to cast the measure as an issue of fairness, arguing that people should be able to decide what their dues are used for. Labor knew it couldn't win the fairness argument, so it tried cacophony and argued that multi-national corporations and out-of-state billionaires backed it and that it would weaken patient rights with HMOs, export American jobs, and privatize education.

This attack on 226 was ultimately successful largely because it followed the established wisdom of fighting initiatives: "Voters confused about an initiative either skip it or vote no."

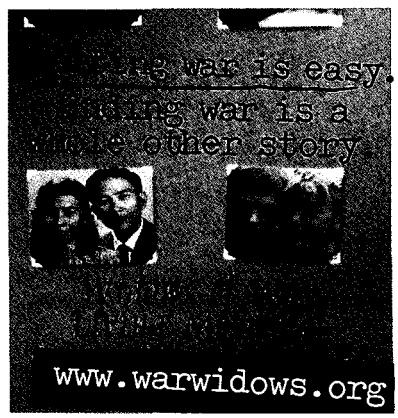
When the complexities of governing become apparent through an initiative, we punt. Broder does not see this as a safety valve for the initiative process, but it may be one some of the time. We recognize that we cannot simply bring into law something that isn't simple, so "paycheck protection" is not law. If there is one moment of disappointment in Broder's book, this is it. His central example is a failed initiative, democracy almost-derailed.

But Broder's larger argument stands: Initiatives are faux plebiscites, engineered by moneyed agendas. Sometimes, the pro-initiative forces are crafty enough and wealthy enough to hide the complexities of governing and make their issue seem so simple and compelling that voters will pass it. Broder offers many examples, from medical marijuana to physician-assisted suicide to lucrative concessions to gambling interests.

Exposing the complexities of government is the job of journalists, of course, but we don't do it very well. In California, at least, we avoid investigating initiatives because of their status as plebiscites. We follow the horse-race, but don't want to come down on one side or the other. Editorials will appear just before election day, but by that time people have been so barraged with paid advertisements that the debate has been entirely framed by consultants. As Oregon Governor John Kitzhaber told Broder, the initiative process, "[r]educes complex issues to sound bites and the question of who has the most money." Broder points out that sometimes (not often) the side with more money loses, but on the whole, initiative democracy is democracy reduced to absurdity.

In conclusion, Broder touches on the various half-measures people have suggested that might improve the process: Require signature-gatherers to be volunteers, disallow out-of-state contributions, end term limits on legislators so that deliberative bodies have more relative power. But after all the evidence that initiatives can derail democracy, none of this is satisfactory. The unarticulated solution is clear: Abolish the system.

WILLIAM SPEED WEED *is a freelance writer and radio producer in San Francisco.*



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Letters continued

Close The Hatch

I found your March piece about the Federalist Society interesting and even a little alarming. Alarming because it reinforced my concern about the ability of Orrin Hatch to subvert the system for confirming federal judges. No single individual should have so much unchallenged power.

But I find it hard to get terribly exercised about the Federalist Society if Kenneth Starr and his results are the best they can do. They look to me like another gang that can't shoot straight. I always thought that lawyers from big, well-respected firms were better than that. So much for preconceived notions.

I enjoy your magazine. Keep up the good work.

BOB WYNHAUSEN
Portland, Ore.

Got The Name Wrong, Too

Your recent article about the Federalist Society (March 2000) was comprehensive and interesting.

I was a bit surprised to learn that, among the many confusions which seem to animate this group, is a historical misunderstanding of both James Madison and of the Federalist Party.

Madison, of course, was seen as an advocate of strong centralized government when he wrote "The Federalist Papers" with Hamilton and Jay. But later in his career, he became one of the founders of the Democratic-Republican Party, ultimately led by Thomas Jefferson. Both Madison and Jefferson came to believe that "federalists, personified by someone like Alexander Hamilton, were a great evil and needed to be wiped out." Indeed, the "party" of Jefferson and Madison was the principal agent in stamping out the Federalist Party to which John Adams and, more strongly, Hamilton and others were closely identified.

So, while one can call Madison a federalist because of his role in "The Federalist Papers," one can certainly not call him a federalist when it comes to the nascent political parties of the late 18th and the early 19th century—just the opposite is true.

I have little doubt that similar confusions permeate the work of this organization.

RICHARD C. LEONE
PRESIDENT,
THE CENTURY FOUNDATION
New York, NY

Forewarned Is Forearmed

Your warning, about a possible dysfunctional welfare-to-work outcome, is prescient: "It's as if we were deliberately trying to create a new generation on welfare." This should be a reminder to policy makers that depriving toddlers of the cognitive stimulation of unhurried interaction with a nurturing parent can perpetuate the cycle of poverty. Such interaction, especially concept-building verbal interaction (as encouraged by a successful home-based preschool program), readies preschoolers for long range school achievement and resulting job/career competencies.

PHYLLIS LEVENSTEIN, ED.D.
ADJUNCT ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR,
SUNY AT STONY BROOK
Stony Brook, NY

Faith Restored

Just a brief note to commend Nicholas Thompson on his article ("Reboot," March 2000). I started out reading his article in my capacity as the CFO of a Linux incubator (Linux Capital Group) but by the time I got halfway through I was transformed into an enthusiastic, inspired student.

Just when I was starting to get really jaded by the daily bombardment of relentlessly materialistic, and in many cases, patented processes for making money—many of which do not add any real value to the quality of our lives—along comes something that restores one's faith in humanity. The way in which the open source movement has employed and evolved from the more admirable qualities of man (altruism, selflessness, empowerment of the individual, freedom of choice) is truly liberating. His article is uplifting in that it gives one a view of the future—a future where open source is applied not just to software, but in a much broader context.

Thank you.

BERN J. GALVIN
Redondo Beach, Calif.

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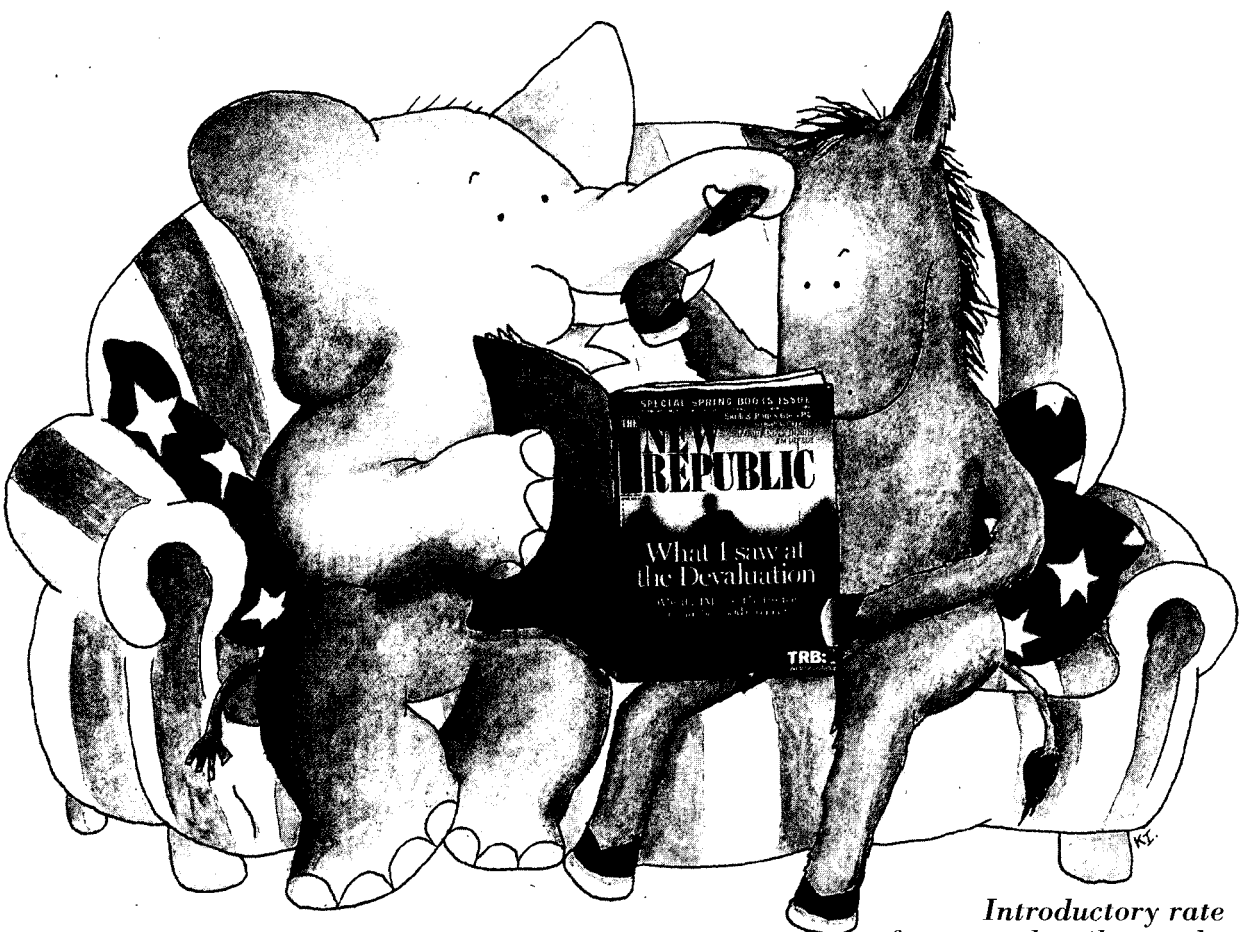

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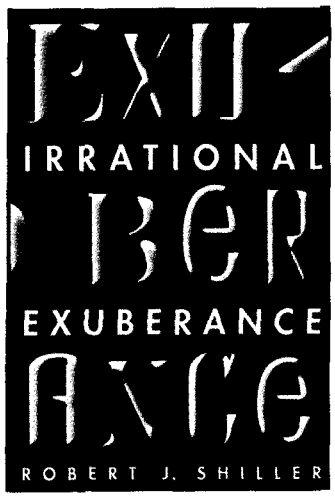

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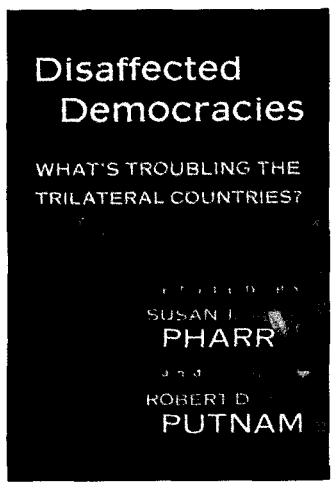

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Edited by Susan J. Pharr and Robert D. Putnam

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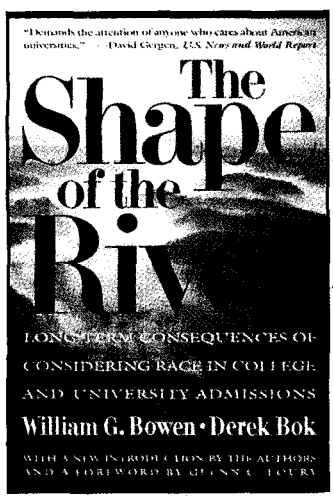

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